The Unquiet Dead

Anarchism, Fascism, and Mythology

0.5: the introduction.

dedication

To 'Anarcha', the enslaved black woman so named by her owner, who was used in experiments by the pioneer of U.S. gynecology, Dr. James Marion Sims. He operated on her thirty times. She is no symbol for our cause, and we shall never know her name for herself; but we may remember her as we exercise our freedom to name ourselves.

context

To be sure, the individual is defenceless, the peril can only be vanquished in community. But every individual perceives that his free will is involved. Hence the recoil from anxiety to more intense anxiety: It depends upon man, each individual man, upon the decision. It must not be, it shall not be—it is not inevitable. That which has happened is a warning. To forget it is guilt. It must be continually remembered. It was possible for this to happen, and it remains possible for it to happen again at any minute. Only in knowledge can it be prevented.

—Karl Jaspers

If fascism could be eradicated it is because the subjectivities that embodied it at a certain point refused to reproduce it, broke with their past, decided that a new dream of cohabitation, another idea of mankind had to be born. If fascism hasn't been totally defeated it is because patriarchy and the colonisation of life by commodity are still our daily bread.

—Claire Fontaine

In a damaged human habitat, all problems merge.

—Cesar Chavez

IT WAS LIKE THIS: two men bumped into each other at a Manhattan post office in July of 1927. Each was preoccupied: the younger with thoughts about his new real-estate business, the older with the question of how to save Sacco and Vanzetti from the electric chair. Fred Trump emerged from the grand post office and collided with Carlo Tresca, hurrying between the columns. Tresca stopped, gracefully apologizing despite his rush; Trump harrumphed, recognizing a social inferior by his Italian accent, and shoved past him, clutching a bundle of letters in his hand, addressed to his superiors in the Klan. Tresca shook himself, shrugged off the incident, and went in to complain once more about the Post Office's refusal to issue his paper a second-class mail certificate, which was limiting the circulation of his desperate appeal on behalf of the two facing execution. And so the two parted: Trump on his way out into the world to make his fortune from the exploitation of the workers Tresca had spent his life going to prison to save.

The two almost could have met before; they were likely part of the same riot, though on different sides and in different boroughs. In New York City on Memorial Day in 1927, two fascists were "killed on their way to join a detachment of black shirts in the Manhattan parade, and 1,000 Klansmen and 100 police staged a free for all battle in Jamaica [Queens]." Fred Trump was arrested at the Klan protest for failure to disperse; he was 22 at the time, and had just incorporated his real-estate business. Carlo Tresca, for his part, was accused of ordering the killings; his newspaper office was raided, and his friends were beaten in prison by police trying to force his name from their lips. No evidence was found and the police concluded he was not involved, but that was not good enough for the fascists. They had already tried to kill him with a bomb the year before; vendetta now renewed, they did not stop until they finally succeeded, sixteen years later. His parole officer watched and did nothing as he was shot down by Mafia gunmen; at his funeral, a policeman burst into tears, mourning Tresca despite their antagonistic positions. Seven years after that, Woody Guthrie wrote angry songs against his new landlord, Fred Trump, who would not rent to black people; though Trump no longer had time to go to racist riots, he still did his part for the cause. By then, his son Donald was four.

The first paragraph of this story is fictional, I think. The second is true... I think. This is the way history works: a series of unbelievable coincidences and near-misses nearly as implausible. As far as I know, Fred Trump and Carlo Tresca never met—but, from a distance, it seems that they must have, because it fits the mythic structure we use to narrativize our experiences. And, while the first paragraph of this book is its only intentional falsehood, there are doubtless many others, for that very reason. History moves in haunting cycles, rhymes that echo—but slightly diverge with each verse. It is in that difference that I place my hope and fear.

I set out, grimly, to write against heroes. Carlo Tresca was certainly among their company—one of the last anarchists left in the U.S. after the Red deportation era, he fought tirelessly for workers in the IWW; he campaigned fiercely against fascists from the moment of their emergence until the moment of his death; he was an anarchist through and through in a time when anarchists were being imprisoned and deported on a daily basis; he was the lover of the famous socialist Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and they fought together against capitalism despite their political differences. Defiant until the end, on the day of his death he made plans to lead a walkout from a meeting that planned to unite Italian-American anarchists, communists, and fascists over their ethnicity, a proposition Tresca found outrageous. Six thousand people came to his funeral. Max Eastman said in his eulogy, "[Tresca was] a fortress. He stood so firm in this time of dissolving characters and standards. Firm in his courage both physical and moral. Firm in his love of the oppressed. He was the last of the great revolutionists who fought implacably with love instead of hate in their hearts." If he is not remembered today, his biographer wryly concludes: "Well, he was an anarchist and must take the consequences of a lost cause."

And yet, Carlo Tresca was a terrible man. His first wife filed charges of brutality against him; he left his wife and child to be with Flynn; he got Flynn's sister pregnant, ruining their sibling relationship for decades; he curried favor with politicians, which earned him distrust from his fellow radicals. For that matter, how heroic must Donald Trump find his father Fred, who taught him his business and left him so much wealth? How much does the father inspire the son, and how disobedient can we be to the legacies they bequeath us?

The purpose of writing history, for me, is to comprehend and defy its action upon the present. Like Walter Benjamin, "the pearl diver," I have become obsessed with curating perfect quotations and crystallized moments. Benjamin gave Hannah Arendt his famous "Theses on the Philosophy of History" a month before his death when they were both refugees in France, hiding from the Vichy authorities. She made it out, but he shot himself on the brink of being captured by the Nazis. Arendt tells us, "Walter Benjamin knew that the break in tradition and the loss of authority which occurred in his lifetime were irreparable, and he concluded that he had to discover new ways of dealing with the past. In this he became a master when he discovered that the transmissibility of the past had been replaced by its citability..." As Benjamin put it,

> To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was'... It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of anger... The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. ...Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.

When I began writing this text in 2013, neo-liberalism, colonialism, globalized trade, white supremacy, gender, and (for some) technology had been more relevant sites of struggle than fascism in the U.S. for decades. We organized against white supremacy and put forth analyses of the role of the police in murdering and oppressing people of color; we dutifully turned out to counter-protest tiny groups of laughably unimportant historical reenactors or skinheads, and forgot them a day later. This was never the case in some parts of the world, which offered less of the privilege of forgetting. Conflicts were frequent and deadly in those places; people have lived, fought and died under everything from openly fascist political parties to less-organized racist gangs, many of whom murdered people who were of color, Jewish, gay, politically radical, or simply in their way. Despite these struggles, as U.S. radicals focused on opposing the gloved hand of power, we tended to forget about the naked fist.

Alas, it has chosen to remind us. At present, the U.S. is experiencing a grassroots fascist resurgence; the U.S. is threatened by ISIS, a religious-fascist state force; rightwing populists use ISIS to justify their fascist rhetoric; the police continue to murder black people with little consequence; and elements

of fascist mythology sometimes even manifest within radical communities. The only way out is through, even as it all becomes ever more-muddied, overlapping, and complex. I write about fascism of the past, therefore, to aid present struggle. I am in no way attempting to provide an exhaustive catalog of current, past, or possible future fascisms; that is everyone's work now. Rather, I write to refute the grave myth of the linear progression of space, time, and politics, as so many others have and will and are.

The Spanish Civil War historian Helen Graham tells us that writing history can serve as "a necessary restitution in the work of collective memory." She describes how, as all talk of those days was potentially deadly for the anti-fascists who survived to live under Franco, it has only become possible in Spain to examine those events recently: not, therefore, from the perspective of participants, or even their children, but with "the grandchild's gaze." It is from a similar perspective that I write about history in this text: to, like Graham, allow "the moral and magic powers of the unquiet dead to flow into the public sphere." The past does not pass; the dead are not dead, for they continue to move us today. Following M. Nourbese Philip: my work is *hauntological*.

These ghosts have not risen simply to be put to rest, but to speak in the manner for which they were killed; some of them must be battled anew in our hearts. As Donna Haraway says, "...the point of the differential/oppositional rewriting is to not make the story come out "right", whatever that would be. The point is to rearticulate the figure... to unsettle the closed logics of the deadly racist misogyny." Or, by Saidiya Hartman's understanding: "...the point isn't the impossibility of escaping the stranglehold of the past, or that history is a succession of uninterrupted defeats, or that the virulence and tenacity of racism is inexorable. But rather that the perilous conditions of the present establish the link between our age and a previous one in which freedom too was yet to be realized." We review and rewrite history *to refuse the closure our anxiety desires*.

In our age of nostalgia, as we sort through and dust off relics of our past and recuperate them for future emotional and financial investment, old attitudes of rebellion are becoming resonant again. I write to assess current and historical movement towards fascism, on the one hand, and liberation, on the other. Neither currently dominate the world we live in; both are opposed to it. I write, therefore, to ask questions of our collective imaginary. To do so, I put pieces of entirely different puzzles together, unexpected conjunctions that may evoke interesting results. As Anna Tsing puts it, "To write a history of ruin, we need to follow broken bits of many stories and to move in and out of many patches. In the play of global power, indeterminate encounters are still important." Or, for those who like dialectics: "The philosophy of dialectics reveals that everything develops through the unity of opposites, of what are paradoxes to simple observation... To truly know anything, then, is to embrace paradoxes and to find beneath the surface the underlying substratum of reality where contradictions interact..."

the map

In the first section, I begin at the beginning... mythologically speaking. In the U.S., Nazi Germany has become a diagram of the exact steps to avoid; even now, pundits are fretfully comparing Trump's policies to Nazi policies, or dismissing concerns about Trunp with the argument that he isn't Hitler. This makes emotional, if not logical sense: the Nazi myth was powerful, rooted in essentializing appeals to age-old Western beliefs about blood, land, and the dangerous stranger. I explore the development of these myths and their manifestations in Nazi circles; I take certain intellectuals to task for their role in developing and legitimizing race-thinking and the justification of Nazi technology; and I critique Wilhelm Reich's failed essentialist analysis of the psychology of fascism.

In section two, I go to the historical beginning: fascism in Italy. I review the complicities and animosities between fascists and anarchists there/then. I begin with Fiume, the city-state that was a short-lived paradise for the avant-garde on both the left and right; I then explore Mussolini's personal evolution. After evaluating the lives and shared destinies of several other anarchists turned fascist, I conclude with a look at Futurism, the sometimes-fascist cultural movement. The lesson of the rise of Italian fascism, above all else, is that if we are serious about opposing fascism we must guard against it within ourselves.

If German fascism is the mystified example people in the U.S. typically refer to, Spain is the myth of fascism and resistance we *should* take to heart. As in the U.S. today, most Spanish people were anti-fascist, or at least not *for* it; only fringe people on the far Right actually identified as fascist—even Franco himself did not call himself a fascist. Fascists rose in response to a progressive government that was making wide reforms; their politics flourished in an environment filled with xenophobia, widespread dissatisfaction with capitalism, and angry veterans with experience fighting in foreign wars. Most importantly, the Spanish resistance came closest to succeeding in defeating fascism out of any of these examples... but were held back by foreign intervention, subtle and obvious, designed to hold the balance of power in Europe. For these reasons, I discuss the Spanish Civil War at length in section three.

One of the purposes of this text is to ask us to look critically at ourselves. We are not fascists, but when we drink from the common well of essentialism, we poison our struggle for freedom. In the fourth, I examine some of the ways in which we have attacked each other as feminists, and ask cis white feminists to do better. I also underline some of the essentialist currents in environmentalist movement, and lay out some alternative ways of thinking. By challenging our perceptions of each other—by refusing to erase or reinscribe difference, but rather to celebrate our diversity as individuals—we will grow stronger without buying into our enemies' false unity.

The fifth section moves towards a look at strategies for mythologically understanding ourselves and our pasts that are not rooted in essentialism, and how they may better equip our struggle for freedom. I consider the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, Audre Lorde, and Saidiya Hartman. Next, I think through the work of some indigenous Canadian prisoners towards gaining access to spiritual practices, and critically evaluate the presentation of that effort. Finally, I meet the argument for embattled nationalisms and essentialism with Jasbir Puar's suggestion that we understand ourselves not as intersections, but as assemblages.

In the sixth section, I step back from the real and focus on the speculative. I describe how bourgeois and fascist mythologies have justified practical evils with immaterial mystifications, and then offer various examples of speculative fiction's attempts to critique our current reality... and dream beyond it. I take seriously Roland Barthes's critique of Leftist myth as failing to function as myth insofar as it is inessential, and try to imagine how we can work around that problem to sustain ourselves and our struggles.

We are told that pluralistic democracy is the only sustainable positive model for our society. I challenge the idea that it is sustainable, desirable, or the best we could hope for. I open the seventh section with an extended discussion of Nietzsche's importance to the theoretical development of elitist politics within fascist, anarchist, and Leftist circles, then explore populist efforts on both the Left and the Right through populist tactics. Finally, I examine democracy and its relative failures.

Lastly, I think through white supremacy in the United States, first from the perspective of its constituents, then listening to some perspectives of its survivors. I present Afro-pessimist and Marxist perspectives as useful ways to understand our current racial/economic situation of struggle. Then, I consider these two embattled narratives as different (and in no way equivalent) ways of thinking about white supremacy. What are the emotional aspects of fascist narrative, and how are survival narratives of those they target differently constituted? What, I ask, does this mean for our project of breathing together in mutual struggle for freedom?

As a feminist act, I have chosen to deliberately reveal my lack of objectivity or remove. Moreover, I will not pretend a level of elite knowledge or expertise; my voice is no more worth hearing than the voices of many others. Therefore, I have sought to present and dialogue with the work of many others in this text. My theoretical reference points include Afro-pessimism, anarchism, Marxism, queer theory, materialist feminism, Foucault's analysis of biopower, and speculative fiction.

essentialism

"...the concept of 'woman' is elusive."
—Donna Haraway

While continually elaborated, this term draws from the Platonic concept that this world is a shadow play, a reflection of our Divine, truest essences; variations of essentialist philosophy are found in the Abrahamic religions, and in many other cultures, spiritualities, and philosophies. Essentialism is the view that any thing, creature, or person has an essential nature that categorically defines it, materially and/or spiritually. As it is practically deployed all around us, essentialism defines a *true aspect* of humanity: manhood, whiteness— and judges everyone in terms of their deviations from that norm. Standards of womanhood, of blackness, and so on are created, and these already-Others[a] are rigorously, exponentially judged for their differences from those standards. The degree to which any person corresponds to these essential definitions is the degree to which they are judged successful examples of their kind. For example, some feminists have responded to the social construction of the feminine Other by claiming the existence of a basic, natural, feminine force in the world. Though this advocacy is meant to oppose patriarchy, it tends to enforce patriarchy in practice, to serve as a basis for policing the boundaries around what it means to be a woman. Good intentions poisoned by essentialism have paved social democracy's road to our present moment. Our deviations are always under surveillance, and seen as criminal, unnatural; there is a corresponding push towards conformity.

a Coined by Hegel, politicized by de Beauvoir, developed by Lacan and Derrida, the term "Other" means generally to place a human as not "one of us", and to oppress them on that basis.

In opposition to these forces, anti-essentialists ranging from materialist feminists, like Monique Wittig, to post-structuralists, like Michel Foucault, have argued that not only human interactions but also our understandings of the rest of the world are fundamentally based in non-natural social constructions, which vary from culture to culture and also between individuals within those cultures. They argue that there is no way to objectively observe anything—we all carry our socially formed views into each enterprise, no matter how allegedly scientific. Our perceptions are therefore charged with power, as is our society; who determines truth and enforces it on others is not determined by who has the clearest observations or the most compelling arguments, but by who holds the most social power. This does not mean we are doomed to experience eternal domination, but that those with less power have to struggle, socially and politically, to enact their truth.

It has been disputed for decades by many different observers whether racism is necessary to fascism. I do not know; but I find that *essentialism*, of one form or another, is. While it may manifest in assertions about raced or gendered truth, or in de-racialized and de-gendered national identity, or in some other formulation, all fascisms share in common the idea of an essential in-group vs. an essential Other. It is not possible to transcend your placement in either category—the most you can do is hope to remain invisible behind enemy lines. The in-group is framed as the more deserving, the more naturally fit, by right of birth or history; the Other is characterized as parasitic, invading, weak, treacherous, malformed. For fascists to believe they are carrying out an ethical imperative—often one that means brutal reprisals, "cleansings," or invasions—they must believe they are acting in accordance with their superior nature, carrying out a responsibility not only to themselves and those they are sworn to protect, but to God (sometimes), a higher truth (often), and nature (always.) Therefore, I will be identifying and critiquing essentialism throughout this text.

biopower and racism

Michel Foucault described a shift (though, importantly, an incomplete and non-linear shift) in the kinds of power that states exercise: he terms these *sovereign* power and *biopolitical* power. He defines sovereign power as the power to *make die and let live*: if someone breaks the law, acts in ways that contradict the power of the leader or has territory the state desires, they can be killed. This was long the justification for war, putting down civil unrest, and the death penalty. Biopower, in contrast, is the power to *make live and let die*. Foucault argues that biopower has become the primary site

of power within dominant society, although it continues to work in tandem with sovereign power over those exceptionalized bodies that can be killed at will. In a particularly coercive twist, biopolitics requires the participation of those it acts upon—for example, to receive welfare benefits, we must fill out forms detailing our activities, resources, and relationships. The state provides this welfare not out of a pure benevolence, but to surveil its population; to ensure a surplus workforce for itself; to prevent insurgency; and to promote an ideology of self-policing in an atmosphere of generalized distrust. No longer is the fear of death the only way to control people—now they can be controlled by altering the conditions in which they live, think, and interact.

Foucault and others have pointed to this development in many different parts of life: the spread of prisons in which to contain and control certain lawbreakers... or, more to the point, members of races and classes designated as criminal; mental asylums and the identification of mental illness as a social tool for defining what kinds of thinking are "healthy" or "unhealthy" (terms that can be made to fit the shifting needs of social control); capitalism's commodification of human interaction and objectification of what used to be intangible; the isolation of sexuality as a practice of fear and desire; and the media spectacle as a way to create and cultivate desires and hatreds. While the development of biopower is far more diffuse and nonlinear than progressive, even the most sovereign actions of our governments now have a biopolitical tinge to them. Our wars are no longer ones of direct conquest and formal colonies, but wars of management, containment, and manipulation. Our profits are no longer those of land and direct wealth, but of the supervision of that land and wealth, as in Iraq and Afghanistan. (It's interesting to think about the transition towards this kind of management—what was the war in Vietnam about, in these terms, and why did the U.S. fail in its project there? Or did it?)

Closer to home, the story is the same. Why, if there is such racial hatred and political incentive towards closing the U.S.-Mexico border, has it not happened? I do not favor closing the border, I favor abolishing it entirely, but neither will happen because the U.S. economy *depends* on undocumented, underpaid labor, kept precarious and unable to organize by virtue of its illegality. In keeping legal immigration mostly inaccessible and the border porous, the government can manage the situation most precisely. The immigration debate is a spectacle made of people's lives. Politicians ruin dreams and let people die in order to get re-elected by voters who are worried about their social values being overturned by the fiction of invaders. This is no aberration, but the state functioning by means of an advanced logic.

The abstractness of this game does not mitigate its deadliness for those within its grasp; the tears of children who will never see their parents again are not dried by this analysis. And yet biopolitical control is not a vast conspiracy, although certainly some of those in power must be aware of what they're doing. Rather, capitalism, racism, patriarchy and the state are aspects of a vast social mechanism which adapts to changing conditions even at the expense of some of its seemingly elemental components. We may hope for social collapse, but there may be no natural outer limit; adaptation is relentlessly sucessful, and Marx's prediction is over a century expired. Progress is an irrelevant narrative; there has been a sideways movement to our history, a deepening of suffering, a muddling of victory, that means *we have never won, except in moments; we have never suffered more than we do now, except for all the times when we did; the apocalypse is not coming, but has always been with us.*

fascism

Everyone who studies fascism argues about how to define it. Michael Billig's four key elements of fascist ideology is a simple working definition, for those who must have one:

> 1) nationalism and/or racism, which espouse a belief in the unity of a nation or race; 2) anti-Marxism and anti-communism because these belief systems would divide the race or nation on the basis of class differences; 3) statism, a strong belief in the role of the state to protect the race or nation and the capitalist system; and 4) the first three features are advanced in such a way as to threaten democracy and individual freedom.

However, following the debate within this discourse has given me the impression that trying for a grand definition, or disqualifying certain characters or moments from being fascist because they lack one of these element, is at least a waste of time, but perhaps even actually antithetical to this project—one that is, again, against essential definitions, and for working models by which you can trace lines of relationship. Therefore, I will discuss only a few themes and a few of their manifestations, and will make reference to their importance as argued by several authors without adopting any of their frameworks.

Furthermore, I intentionally advocate for a *broad* definition of fascism. There seems to be concern about "throwing the word around"; in contrast, I feel concern at limiting our use of it. I am quite ready to say that the Islamic

State is a religious-fascist nation; that fascist movement is on the rise in the United States; that fascists are murdering people in the Ukraine. Our enemies are not Voldemort; though they are nearly as terrifying, we need not fear to speak their name. However, we must avoid dehumanizing or homogenizing those we recognize as fascists; that will serve neither our ethical project nor our tactical thinking.

There is no necessary accordance between elements of fascist thought and particular fascist regimes. The disparate ideas and arguments of many true believers found currency for a time, and were later discarded; I do not think they are any less valid examples of fascist thinking for their lack of "success" or state-granted legitimacy. The prominent scholar of Italian fascism, Renzo de Felice, explains this tendency as one of fascist movement versus fascist regime, which had to suppress ideological fascist movement in pursuit of practical domination. There are many examples of this dialectic, even just among the two times and places most generally agreed to be fascist: D'Annunzio's poetic fervor and action was supported only occasionally and strategically by Mussolini, who was generally suspicious of him; Nazi Germany was briefly interested in Futurism, but eventually dismissed it as too modern; Heidegger found currency among Nazi intellectuals during the early years of the regime, but quickly fell from grace; various racial theorists in fascist Italy struggled for supremacy with no clear victor; and so on. This is not to elevate these theoreticians and true believers over the grimy regime: all have blood on their hands, or would if they got their way. Also, this intellectual hetereogenity made the regimes that oversaw them more durable, if less effective as totalitarian states. Suppressing divergent lines of thought in the name of the fascist desire for individual-nation-state conformity would have resulted in a quicker demise for those states.

This is why I talk about essentialism in feminist and environmental movement, and why I analyze fantasy novels—not to taint them with an accusation of fascism, but to determine which mythic elements are common between fascism and friendlier realms, and which cannot help but struggle against both the world as it is and the world as our enemies would like it to be. And, though I reference certain elements of current fascist movement, I am in no way attempting to provide a catalog or even a survey of modern fascism, white supremacist populism, or elite racist formations. That is an immediate project for everyone to undertake.

I also explore elitism and populism as poles of political organizational tactics common between anarchists, fascists, and unaffiliated rebellions, and therefore ways to understand how revolutionary movement is built, undermined, and soured. Reactionary populism is blatantly on the rise in the U.S., and need not confuse us; as Hannah Arendt said about pre-Nazi Germany, "In the growing prevalence of mob attitudes and convictions—which were actually the attitudes and convictions of the bourgeoisie cleansed of hypocrisy—those who traditionally hated the bourgeoisie and had voluntarily left respectable society saw only the lack of hypocrisy and respectability, not the content itself." Or, elsewhere: "...the language of the mob was only the language of public opinion cleansed of hypocrisy and restraint." But this does not occur only in conservative or racist formations; Occupy fed off a similar energy on the Left. This is the problem of modern American politics, as it was for the Germans Arendt saw: "Unable as yet to live without fear and hope, these masses are attracted by every effort which seems to promise a man-made fabrication of the Paradise they had longed for and of the Hell they had feared." Meanwhile, there are elite formations of self-acknowledged fascists arming for attack, simultaneously scorning the populist Right and using them as cover. This suggests to me that tactics alone can be used by anyone: it is the emotional tone, the political content, the material actions, and the self-critical eye that make a rebellious politic liberating. It is fear and hope, past and future we must discard in favor of a present-oriented emotion and practice.

speculative fiction

I am serious about abolishing our constructed understanding of space and time—but I think this is best done with playful tools. Therefore, I reference and discuss speculative fiction throughout this text. We all refer to myths on a daily basis to move through the world—the bourgeois myths of success and safety; the proto-fascist myths of the glorious past and dangerous future; the libertarian[b] myths of freedom, equality, and peace. We know, on some level, that these myths are fictional; how have we engaged with them in explicitly fictional environments? What does it mean to fight the war of the past in the future, or to have won everything at the cost of a single suffering innocent? The stories we read our children, or escaped with as teenagers, or are streamed to us on sleepless nights, mean something. What could we make them mean?

b The word libertarian is used here, and throughout, in the European sense of "partisans of liberty"; it does not refer to American Randians unless so specified.

In short, I write to point out that generalizations are made to oppress people, and so the anti-fascist and anarchist project is to recognize individual difference and organize along lines of affinity while recognizing our historical oppressions. Moreover, I think it is worth interrogating our present imaginary to trace the genealogy of our emotional and material relationships to the mythic currents shaping the beds of political and social projects. This is of deep practical importance: if fascism is, as it claims, experiencing a rebirth, we may be able to kill it in its infancy... but to do so, we must identify it within our own hearts. Our struggle against fascism must not supplant our focus upon the long-anticipated, but never fully realized, birth of freedom. Furthermore, we must reject space and time as constructs developed—like gender—to justify political projects of destruction. If the past seems sweeter to us, it is only because we were children then—or because we have believed the redemptive fictions created to found our present. It is crucial to remember that not all childhoods are happy... and that no unhappy childhood is blamelessly so. Bad things do not happen to children inevitably, like bad weather, though they may be the result of equally complex relationships and flows of power. Refusal is possible; and when it is not, it was for someone else, further up the line. The fascist and capitalist arguments are alike in that they mean suffering for children today, and justify it by satisfying the imagined needs of the children of the past or future. Rather than caring for these past or future children—which care, however well-intentioned, is likely to be the foundation of fresh misery—let us consider the choices, however haunted, with which we are faced in the present.

note

When I composed this text, I was not yet aware of the full extent of Hannah Arendt's anti-black racism; I encourage anyone who would like to know more about it to read Kathryn Gines' comprehensive book on the matter, *Hannah Arendt and the Negro Question*. I have chosen to continue to work with Arendt's writings and concepts while critically interrogating her racism, though her work has become compromised in my eyes. All of our choices are haunted.

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One may see that the history, which is now indivisible from oneself, has been full of errors and excesses, but this is not the same thing as seeing that, for millions of people, this history—oneself—has been nothing but an intolerable yoke, a stinking prison, a shrieking grave. It is not so easy to see that, for millions of people, life itself depends on the speediest possible demolition of this history, even if this means the leveling, or the destruction, of its heirs.

—James Baldwin

It is true that totalitarian domination tried to establish these holes of oblivion into which all deeds, good and evil, would disappear, but just as the Nazis' feverish attempts, from June 1942 on, to erase all traces of the massacres—through cremation, through burning in open pits, through the use of explosives and flame-throwers and bone-crushing machinery—were doomed to failure, so all efforts to let their opponents 'disappear in silent anonymity' were in vain. The holes of oblivion do not exist. Nothing human is that perfect... One man [sic] will always be left alive to tell the story... the lesson of such stories is simple and within everybody's grasp. Politically speaking, it is that under conditions of terror most people will comply but *some people will not*...

—Hannah Arendt

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The Unquiet Dead

Anarchism, Fascism, and Mythology

1. Fascist Ideology in Germany and Further

"In Nazi Germany, questioning the validity of racism and antisemitism... was like questioning the existence of the world."

— Hannah Arendt

The emotional background of fascism is one of failed dreams. For Germany, long a feudal collection of principalities struggling towards cultural and political unity, these dreams were winning the First World War and, after its defeat, redemption through the Weimar Republic. Unification being a social process rather than a matter of political decree, Germany found the Weimar Republic a disappointment. As George Mosse observes,

> Experiences rarely, if ever, turn out as anticipated, and this is especially true if the anticipation has gone on for a long time. For many German thinkers the anticipation of unity had grown to almost messianic dimensions, and the confrontation with Bismarck's bloodless *Realpolitik* was a tremendous disappointment. At first, the new Reich was greeted with great enthusiasm. But the kind of enthusiasm it received is more properly reserved for religious experiences, not political ones, and the business of government is hardly designed to produce a continuing state of ecstasy.

Modernity and its corresponding alienation played just as large a role in the turn towards fascism as these failed political solutions. "...[M]any turned from rational solutions to their problems and instead delved into their own emotional depths. The longing for self-identification, the individual's desire to fulfill his capacities, ironically heightened by the process of alienation, was accompanied by the contradictory urge to belong to something greater than oneself, a striving that inevitably circumscribed the individual's independence." These existential problems were very real, but the Volkische[a] tendency they generated represented a flight from them rather than a tangible solution to them. "An ideology that was only vaguely relevant to the real problems facing the German people ultimately became normative for the solutions to those problems" —that is, the broadening of their long-nurtured dream of racial and cultural superiority. They at last found the unity they sought in hatred. This pattern repeats itself today, as right-wing populist rhetoric calls for the expulsion of immigrants rather than labor rights for all; it is the nature, I say advisedly, of the beast.

a "Populist", roughly. I preserve the German to distinguish this particular movement from other populist movements.

The Volkische ideology is essentialist. It is reminiscent of Lamarckian biology, a pseudo-science which argues that biological shifts not only occur in response to environments, but that habits, lifeways, can be physically as well as culturally inherited. The Volkische believers elevated this theory to a moral precept: for an individual to be "rooted" in their landscape meant that they were correctly connected to and expressing the cosmic lifeforce of their Volk in their lifestyle, actions, and way of thinking. This viewpoint continues to hold currency in many other cultural contexts, including among many who neither view themselves as racist nor hold the social power necessary to actually be racist. In the manifestation most difficult to dismiss, many indigenous people express a sense of connection to the land, of an inherent need to practice the lifeways that have been frequently denied to them by occupiers. These expressions—frequently part of a resistance culture I honor—are sometimes flavored by essentialism, though one not typically based in the sort of power that makes oppression on its basis possible. I find this tendency neither possible to fully support nor to condemn, and explore its particularities in later sections. However, those whose race has been endowed with social power have very often weaponized it for destructive purposes. This is the most successful possible outcome for all essentialist projects in a world woven through by power dynamics. That fact makes essentialism itself the enemy, not only racism.

While he was not formally connected to the Volkische movement, Richard Walther Darré popularized the phrase "blood and soil" as a means of summing up the push for natural renewal via the Volkische mindset.[b] I also find this a useful shorthand for Volkische thinking as the basis for National Socialism: the German people, defined not by citizenship, nor by residence in Germany, but by *blood*, were connected to the *land*; they deserved all of their land, or even more of it, for "living space", and would accomplish that goal by both "purifying" their blood and spilling that of others. It is both the importance of blood as a means of legitimizing residency and belonging, and its relationship to the land that I find essentialist.

Here I will mainly discuss the evolution of German fascist ideology from the Volkische movement, with a short detour into fascist Italy's race-thinking to highlight commonalities and difference in fascist ideology. I will discuss Italian fascism in more specific detail in the next chapter.

b While Darré initially found favor within National Socialist administration, he was "gradually marginalized from power. His schemes were not only utopian, but conflicted with the massive industrialization demanded by the Nazi war machine."

The German soil was made ready for fascism by economic downturn and the failure of the Left to fully seize its opportunities. By the end of World War I, the Empire was replaced by the Weimar Republic and hundreds of thousands of civilians had starved. Both the economy and general morale were at incredible lows. Many Germans, especially those returning home from war, felt betrayed by the new government that ended the war. Their heroic war, a war that should have proven the superiority of the Volk, had ended badly—they needed someone to blame, and they needed another chance to prove themselves. Meanwhile, as the economy worsened and the middle and upper classes turned right, the working class turned left. A revolutionary wave was sweeping Europe in response to the Russian revolution, and Germany was deeply affected. A myth spread that German revolutionary forces had attacked the German army from the rear. Now known as the "Stab them in the back" legend, this myth has been debunked, but was a substantial source of paranoia and antagonism at the time. The real story of the Left's defeat is more typically depressing.

Huge strikes broke out in 1918, and Rosa Luxemberg and Karl Leibknecht formed the Spartacus League out of the Social Democrat Party in response to this energy. In November of 1918, several military ships mutinied. When their crews were arrested, thousands of protestors came out in solidarity with them. After these protestors were fired upon by the military, the protest turned into a large-scale revolt; several cities were taken by mutinied soldiers and striking workers. A Soviet Republic was established in Munich, led by socialists and anarchists. As the revolt continued to spread and the leaders of component countries of the Empire began abdicating, the revolution was co-opted by the Social Democrats, who began making decisions contrary to revolutionary goals. The Spartacus League and the KPD at large resisted this in the January Revolt of 1919, but were crushed by the Free Corps, "troops who had refused to demobilize after the war and who became attracted to Volkish ideals." Originally the Kaiser's tool for attacking revolutionaries, these troops were now deployed by the SPD against their former comrades. Around a thousand supporters of the Soviet Republic were killed. Rosa Luxemberg's body was dumped in a river; Karl Leibknecht was delivered to a morgue. Other revolts and strikes followed, but the end was in sight.

The German Revolution ended in April 1919 when the Weimar Republic was officially established. Although many of the revolutionaries were inspired by Communist, socialist, and anarchist ideas, the SPD instead formed a democratic republic, at least officially in an attempt to avoid civil war between the German Right and Left. This concession proved to be of dubious value; a large part of the bourgeoisie entered the Weimar Republic unwilling to participate in democracy. They believed the political parties only served to divide the Volk; as, by this point, the Volk was the primary ideal for the German Right. As we shall see throughout this text, fascist reaction nearly always takes place upon the failure of the revolutionary Left to fully realize their ideals.

The reconstituted conservative party of the 1920s, the DNVP, quickly became the dominant party in the Reichstag. Volkische ideology and anti-Semitism were central. "By the 1920s the Jew had become a principal figure in Volkish ideology and in much of conservative thought both inside and outside the DNVP, and was absolutely essential to the endurance of the ideology." By the 1920s, kids were playing Aryans and Jews as, in other times and places, they play cops and robbers, or cowboys and Indians.

I. The Volk: blood and soil

Volk is the German word for "people"; it came to represent the true, common German, who lived in a rural environment and embodied the virtues of the land. It refers not simply to a collection of bodies, but to the essential spirit of a people—what makes Germans German. The Volkische movement that existed during the seventy years before the Nazi party took power in Germany prepared the way for it, created the social and philosophical conditions necessary for National Socialism to find such general acceptance—and, later, for the justification of its most vicious policies. This philosophy, one of going back to the land, of restoring the natural correspondence between the German people and their surroundings—and, later, of ridding the land of its parasitic modernist invaders—is deeply essentialist. It is based in romanticism and nostalgia, and in the myth of eternal return and rebirth so important to fascism. Without its felt justification in nature, however, it would have few of its teeth.

The philosophy began innocently enough with Johann von Herder, an early German Romantic philosopher who wrote in the late 18th century. He theorized that each culture shaped the character of its Volk; a multiculturalist, he did not think any Volk was superior to any other. He further theorized

the existence of "the people," a central Enlightenment concept, as opposed to the old framework of the masses vs. the aristocracy, and affirmed the importance of national identity. At first, his ideas led to a mere affirmation and celebration of German culture; for instance, the Brothers Grimm were inspired by his writing to collect their "essentially German" folktales. Later, more mystic romantics drew from his ideas to try to solve social problems; they believed one could alleviate the individual's sense of modern alienation by accessing a sense of shared, cosmic life energy that flowed from nature, through the Volk, into the individual. George Mosse explains:

> The human soul could be in rapport with nature since it too was endowed with a soul. Every individual could therefore find an inner correspondence with nature, a correspondence which he shared with his Volk. In this way the individual linked himself with every other member of the Volk in a common feeling of belonging, in a shared emotional experience. Yet, after all, the Volk did not have universal dimensions, but was linked to a particular national unit. Not all of nature, therefore, but only its regional manifestations gave the Volk its character, potential, and unity. Nature was defined as landscape: those features of the environment peculiar and familiar to the members of one Volk and alien to all others. ...The landscape thus became a vital part of the definition of the Volk through which it retained continuous contact with the life spirit of the transcendent cosmos. In this respect the desired reality was charged with both emotional value and rural aspirations, reflecting quite explicitly the Volkish desire to escape from and to negate the validity of the century's increasingly industrial and urban values.

When one holds a religious faith in what one believes to be the natural order, nature is the primary source of revealed truth. Science is sometimes used to justify this faith by defining the natural order; however, as periodic revolutions in the sciences have shown us, each scientific theory and justification is quite limited, replaced in time by a better theory... with its own faults and limits. This fuzziness does not tend to make us generally skeptical of science; rather, it allows believers in nature to disregard science when it is not convenient to them, and rely instead on "what everyone knows": that is, a common sense defined by the values of the class—or race—in power. This was the case for the Volk.

Adherents to the Volkische philosophy idealized the simple life of the countryside, and argued that German society would be best improved by a return to rural values and practices. "Man was seen not as a vanquisher

of nature, nor was he credited with the ability to penetrate the meaning of nature by applying the tools of reason; instead he was glorified as living in accordance with nature, at one with its mystical forces." This line of thought is echoed today by various back-to-the-land movements, fascist or otherwise: cities and modernity are seen as social and environmental problems, and people of all sorts of political affiliations desire to escape them. The Volkische philosophy did not idealize "nature" in the sense of *wilderness*, but a domesticated, agricultural nature: the countryside. "In taming nature, Volkish thinkers rehabilitated it as a landscape filled with flora, fauna, villages, and small rustic peasant farms, entities which had lived within nature so long that they had become an integral part of the countryside." One thinks of the American conservative nostalgia for the family farm as much as or more than the American liberal and libertarian homesteading movement here, but I would argue the same impulse motivates them all: the fear of modernity as it is represented by cities and their dangerous, decadent, racially and sexually diverse environments... and a recognition of the alienation generated by capitalism and a lack of control over one's own life.[c]

Many Volkische participants started land projects, some of which still exist in Germany today, with varied politics. Others formed youth movements designed to reinculcate rural values of strength, independence, and relationship to nature in German children; these youth movements were later immensely useful to the rise of National Socialism, as children who grew up in them became fascist adults, or as the movements themselves became explicitly fascist. Most Germans did not actively participate in the Volkische movement, but, as a cultural backdrop, it was a vital force for affecting their worldviews. Most dangerously, it created and/or reinforced an Other: the Jew.

The "restless" class of people—the industrial proletarian, the migratory worker, the open homosexual, the young urban intellectual—these were all seen as rootless, inauthentic representations of modernity. "Above all, there was the Jew, who by his very nature was restless. Although the Jew belonged to a Volk, it occupied no specific territory and was consequently doomed to rootlessness." (This also serves as a basis for the intense Nazi persecution of Roma people, more commonly known by the racist term "Gypsies.") In analyzing one of many popular anti-Semitic novels of the time, Mosse observes: "In this framework the Jew was identified with modern industrial

c It is of note that white-owned single-family homes in the suburbs were encouraged in the U.S. after WWI by the federal government in a policy intended to limit the spread of Bolshevism. Hoover, then the secretary of commerce, thought that racial mixing in diverse cities would contaminate native-born Americans with Communist ideas.

society, which uprooted the peasant, deprived him of his land, caused his death, and thereby destroyed the most genuine part of the Volk." Some Jewish people did indeed serve as moneylenders, intermediaries between poor peasants and capitalist forces; this was one of the few economic roles historically permitted to Jews.[d] This meant that "to the debt-ridden peasant, the Jew represented the most easily identifiable and immediately present element of the greedy power of modern capitalist civilization." Therefore, Jews were not only seen as invaders, but their perceived rootlessness was believed to be the source for predatory behavior that threatened the "rightful" inhabitants of the land.

Essentialism was also a factor within Jewish movements. Some German Jewish Zionists wore yellow stars long before it was required by Nazi law, as a demonstration of their Jewish identity and pride, and as a reproach to assimilationist Jews. Six years before the decree forcing Jews to wear the star, a Zionist newspaper proclaimed, "Wear it with Pride, the Yellow Star!" Similar terrible ironies abound between Zionism and the Nazi state. For example, at the time of Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem, marriage between Jews and non-Jews was not recognized in Israel—as it was not by the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, which prohibited marriage between Jewish and Gentile Germans as a form of bestiality. This is, of course, not the same; but it is troubling. By HannahArendt's evaluation, underdog-claims of superiority fed the paranoia and hatred of their oppressors, and created an essentialist basis for their ideology. "Politically, it is not important whether God or nature is thought to be the origin of a people; in both cases, however exalted the claim for one's own people, peoples are transformed into animal species so that a Russian appears as different from a German as a wolf is from a fox. A 'divine people' lives in a world in which it is the born persecutor of all other weaker species, or the born victim of all other stronger species. Only the rules of the animal kingdom can possibly apply to its political destiny."[e]

The historic Jewish claim to *divine* chosenness seemed like a threat to the Volkische claim to *natural* chosenness; it threatened their fragile identity. "The hatred of the racists against the Jews sprang from a superstitious apprehension that it actually might be the Jews, and not themselves, whom God had chosen... There was an element of feeble-minded resentment against a people who, it was feared, had received a rationally incomprehensible guarantee that they would emerge eventually, and in spite of appearances, as

d Indeed, Jews forced into this position as moneylenders and points of exchange became vital to society, as Islam and Christianity both prohibited the collection of interest.

e This evaluation, of course, is marked by a Western rationalist understanding of "the animal kingdom", itself deeply worth disputing.

the final victors in world history." This fear was enhanced by Nietzsche's unhelpful proclamations about the revolutionary character of the Jewish people, to which we shall return in section 7.

German Gentile peasants, united with nature, associated with healthy masculinity and comfort with using force, were seen as the temples of Volkische power. However, the largely middle-class writers and thinkers of the movement seldom imagined becoming peasants themselves. Instead, Volkische ideologues imagined the rehabilitation of the bourgeoisie and workers into the patriarchal merchant families and artisans of the legendary past. These roles were quickly disappearing, and their constituents blamed modernity. Increasingly, they came to represent that modernity in terms of the Jew.

We have a tendency to think of Nazi anti-Semitism as psychopathic, inexplicable; we picture the most notorious Nazis frothing at the mouths with hatred, conducting horrifying experiments—madmen. Psychopathy was certainly part of anti-Semitism, but its appeal became much broader as Volkische thinkers generalized the image of the Jew as the dehumanized monster, the enemy of the people. Volkische writers described them as an inherently unstable, parasitic people, as they are landless, forever foreign. Within this mindset, Jews are inherently incompatible with the German landscape, or with anywhere except Israel. In their occupancy of Germany, they seek to steal land from the peasants. They are shallowly materialistic, always wanting the *best* instead of what is eternally good and eternally denied them—peace and rootedness. They are the capitalist snake coiled around the peasant tree. In the Volkische imagination, Jews became both the epitome of and the symbol for hated and feared modernity.

Lagarde, another early contributer to the Volkische ideology, framed a spiritual angle on the primacy of Germans and the consequential "abhorrence of the Jew… which accused the Jew of possessing a sterile religion and a consequently materialistic nature, of entertaining an international conspiracy, and of being incompatible aliens on German soil… [this] led to the prophecy of a mortal struggle between Germans and Jews." As the idea of national unity had never been fully assimilated into German culture, it seemed quite possible that Jews—perceived as a state within the German state—could overthrow it, or were in the process of doing so culturally. In modern America this kind of conspiracy thinking is still prevalent on the Right: then and there as now and here, the perceived threat to the German people was not limited to the Jew, but encompasses the lumpenproletariat, the Jew, dissidents, migrants—and

cities, progress, modernity, internationalism. All of this maps well onto the current American white supremacist belief structure: the lumpen is the urban youth of color; the peasants are rural whites; and Jews are journalists, college professors and stock traders, making money while shaping our society to their own ends. The new myth that small towns in the U.S. Midwest are now run by Sharia law after a large influx of Muslim immigrants is even more transparent in its conspiratorial racism.

In fact, if the interaction between class and ethnicity in our society could be reduced to a simple conspiracy theory, it would operate the other way. The strength of Volkische ideology lay not in logic, but in its widespread appeal to the rich and middle-class. At first a fringe intellectual philosophy, it spread by way of, for example, Wagner's circle of artists and intellectuals, who transmitted these ideas to schoolteachers, who influenced the minds of the young. Novels were written extolling the virtues of the Volk and the sins of the enemy; Volkische plays were performed in great masses, a unifying group experience of reliving moments of Germanic power: a public cult. (This continued to happen well into the Nazi era, within the form of various theatrical depictions of Nazi unity.) Racist theories gave a visual, concrete direction to the "whole man"—a perfect Aryan, at peace with his environment. This racism, along with theosophy, sun worship, the Nordic beauty cult and strategically deployed gay yearning, the desire for class peace, and the influences of youth culture all eventually went into the makeup of the early members of the National Socialist Party.

All of this has to do with the new idea of class mobility, and a vague sense that democracy might be desirable, and other factors at play in the European transition from the feudal state into enclosure. The economic situation was bad during the years of Volkische formation, and some intellectuals were concerned that Communism might become the most popular response. For these types, Eugene Diederichs made Volkism respectable under the banner "New Romanticism", an alternative to positivism and materialism. This appealed to those who opposed capitalism and Left radicalism alike, always a large racist constituency; Communism and related tendencies were thus marginalized as a "Jewish" sort of politics, their critique distorted for reactionary use. The popularization of anthropology and social Darwinism also made it possible for these ideas to become intellectually respectable. On the modern political level of the party, Pan-Germans, who called for the unification of all Germanic-language peoples, constituted the strongest and most respectable of the Volkish groups. "Through it, Volkish ideas found firm footing within the establishment itself; and thus this organization must

be ranked with the Youth movement and the educational system as the chief transmitters of the German ideology from the prewar to the postwar world." The literate, aristocratic bourgeoisie came to form the largest bloc within the Volkische ideology, which is amusing in light of their idealization of the peasant life; those in power always prefer to believe the lives of those who work for them are idyllic, but seldom find it wise to ask them.

The concept of *Volk* is based around a faith in natural essence that is a necessary part of fascism: people must be defined in order to be controlled, separated, placed, and Othered. There must be something definitively *good*, natural, right about our side; the enemy must be to blame for all the problems in the world. Racism sometimes takes a cultural rather than a physical approach to its Othering, but I think it is not a stretch to say it is all essentialist. Without this basic agreement that people's differences are based in more than their experiences and actions, fascism and racism both crumble at their base. And, importantly, essentialism is a group phenomenon. Lagarde "thought that the individual could be genuine only in a circumscribed form, that his uniqueness was derived from the peculiar character of the larger unit, the Volk." The individuality of the people is based in the facelessness of the member. This kind of terror erases the former ethical code, and is able to justify itself purely through reference to its notion of nature. Hannah Arendt: "Guilt and innocence become senseless notions; 'guilty' is he who stands in the way of the natural or historical process which has passed judgment over 'inferior races', over individuals 'unfit to live', over 'dying classes and decadent peoples.'...Terror is lawfulness, if law is the law of the movement of some suprahuman force, Nature or History."

This assignment of criminal guilt to groups of racialized subjects at the forefront of capitalist development is familiar from many different reactionary atmospheres: one thinks of the current backlash in the U.S. against Latino workers, who are depicted as "stealing jobs" from white workers. Without a developed anti-capitalist perspective, and within a culture of generalized racism, it is easy for the nearest target to take all the blame. The Volkish mythology of blood and soil gave this instance of the general phenomenon an intense power. When white Americans feel a sense of entitlement, it is based in a culture of white supremacy and a sense of "we were here first"—but the "here first" sentiment can only go back so far, as most are uneasily aware, and there is a theoretical basis of general equality and freedom in U.S. society with which even an enthusiastic racist must negotiate. Hopefully, this crack in U.S. racist ideology can be widened. For those thinking within the Volkische framework, non-Jewish Germans were fundamentally, *essentially*

here first; and the laws of nature meant that they both inevitably would—and, in a dialectical contradiction common to fascism, must desperately strive to—maintain dominance, evicting the perceived outsiders by force as necessary. This survival thinking displaced other, gentler values.

Not all Volks were anti-Semitic; many were humanists, and some had deep respect for German Jews, whom they saw as constituting a Volk of their own, or as assimilated into German society. Egidy, for example, was an non-racist Volkische thinker... but his ideas around youth education were hijacked for use in explicitly racist schools, much as identity politics have been hijacked by the alt-right in the U.S. today. Langbehn, a Volkische racist who believed himself a messianic prophet, proved more influential than Egidy. He declared that "race is a pervasive and decisive force", was intensely anti-Semitic, and advocated racial subjugation, even slavery. Kant also played a part: "Volkish theorists found a theory of race in the writings of Kant which was based primarily on geographic factors and held that geographically determined racial characteristics were accompanied by an 'inner life force.'" Philology and anthropology also contributed to racial grouping and characterizing. Before racism as a group commitment could take hold in Germany, the rational and scientific affirmation of race as a physical reality was necessary.

racism as a manifestation of essentialism within fascism

"Every society... needs a certain proportion of citizens who have to be detested."
—Benito Mussolini

"With race theories you can prove or disprove anything you want."
—Max Weber

While various forms of bigotry have existed since antiquity, mid-19th century European societies legitimized race-thinking as the only practical, realistic way to understand the world. At the time, scientific racism was only seen as possibly problematic by the most liberal observers, and then only when people attempted to divine inner racial characteristics from external ones. European and British scientists, in the context of their renewed attempts to discover and classify every living thing on the planet (a project previously begun by Aristotle), sought to similarly classify human beings by our variance in surface characteristics. Modern scientists now agree, although there are certainly racist detractors, that those characteristics vary more than they concur within "ethnicities." It is also true that most people of a supposedly single ethnic heritage possess genes that originate from many parts of the

globe. Race, scientists have concluded, is a social construct with no basis in biology. Therefore, while science bears a heavy legacy of blame for aiding in the manufacturing and legitimizing of race, our war against the construct in its destructive forms must be a social one... though it is worth keeping an eye on the scientists now theorizing epigenetics and toying with gene manipulation through CRISPR.

While the Nazi history of anti-Semitism and other sorts of racialized hatred is well-known, the Italian legacy demonstrates that hatred is not necessary to an essentialist fascist enterprise. Mussolini was not, apparently, personally racist or anti-Semitic and only adopted that rhetoric as a practical maneuver, complying with Nazi Germany's racial policies as the two became allies. Aaron Gillette argues that Mussolini's central goal was Italian improvement and unification: he found it helpful to identify an Other, an enemy without, to diminish atomization within. Max Weber says that "the concept of race exists only in the context of communal identity." Insofar as Mussolini wanted to create a racial unity in Italy, it was of the race of the fascist man, rather than of the Aryan; Nietzsche, not the anti-Semites, was his reference point, as he said he wanted to shift Italy "from a race of slaves to a race of masters." This kind of "differentialist" racism, even when it is not based in an emotionally-felt bigotry, contributes heavily to the mythic idea of people of color (including those Jews whom we would now perceive as white) as a contamination, a plague, germs to be eradicated—hence the fear among these sorts of racists of "miscegenation." It also helps to create the emotional distance needed to take inhumane measures against the Other. "How can one feel sympathy with a virus?"

Lack of personal hatred aside, Mussolini's administration created the 1938 Manifesto of Racial Politics; statements spreading paranoia around non-white birthrates, black riots in the U.S., and other talking points of racist propaganda; and established legal measures prohibiting Jewish people from a wide range of roles and activities... although they did not, in practice, apply to most Jews; war veterans, their families, and members of the fascist party themselves were exempted. While this may seem shocking, "[t]here can hardly have been a Jewish family without at least one member in the Fascist Party, for this happened at a time when Jews, like other Italians, had been flocking for almost twenty years into the fascist movement, since positions in the Civil Service were open only to members." Italian scientific racism also served as "ethical" justification for the immensely bloody Italian occupation of Ethiopia. Elsewhere, just as tactically, Mussolini distanced himself somewhat from racism without entirely disclaiming it:

> ...there are thousands of Negroes who fight as soldiers under the Italian flag, and who have always fought magnificently for us and themselves. This can be said too of the Arabs... We Fascists acknowledge the existence of races, their differences and their hierarchy, but we do not propose to present ourselves to the world as the embodiment of the White race set against other races, we do not intend to make ourselves the preachers of segregation and of racial hatreds when we see that our fiercest critics are not the Negroes of Harlem—who could profitably use their time to take care of their colleagues who are daily and Christianly lynched in the United States—but are mostly genuine Whites in Europe and America.

Observe how sly and self-serving this equivocation is! One is reminded of the short-lived talks between the Nation of Islam and the American Nazi Party over their mutual interest in separatism. It does not seem, thankfully, that Mussolini's rhetoric met with any such reciprocal interest.

The process of racial theorizing in Italy was heavily influenced by Nazi race theory, Gillette argues—but in reaction *against* it rather than in compliance with it. Nazi and pre-Nazi racial theorists claimed that people of Nordic descent (particularly Germans) best exemplified the virtues of their Aryan ancestors, and used Italy as an example of degenerate Aryan descendants. Italians did not much appreciate this; Mussolini himself was subject to an anthropometrical examination while a youthful vagabond in Switzerland, and resented it intensely. Italians "considered the arrogant German anti-Italian rhetoric to be a consequence of a deep-seated inferiority complex, brought about by their 'parvenu status, lack of culture, and dislike by other peoples.'" Of course, Italy was suffering from its own inferiority complex over its lack of success as a nation-state, which contributed heavily to its impulse towards racialized unity: was racial contamination and weakness the reason it had not succeeded? Some racial theorists claimed that Italy must have been contaminated by racial mixing during Roman imperial days, while others denied that the proud Italian blood could possibly be surmounted by foreign blood.

All of this led to a, at best, dialectical approach to Italian racial theory, one that simultaneously attempted to disprove the German approach and assert its own version, but also tried, in later years, to stay compatible enough with German policy for the countries to remain allies. Italian theorists variously claimed that Italians were the true Aryans and Germans the degenerates; asserted the importance of the inherited culture of their Roman past; and discussed the effect of the physical environment in shaping national character

(cold climates produce cold people, but Italy's warm climate produces hot-blooded people, etc.) Italian racism was also marked by intense debates between advocates of different branches; spiritual or philosophical racism, biological racism, and Julius Evola's mystical racism all fought for theoretical supremacy, resulting in a fairly incoherent paralysis within the discourse. Because of the German academic emphasis on the sciences, biological racism was far more popular there, which made genocide more plausible in Germany than in Italy. The Italian Church also resisted biological racism while wholly complying with philosophical racism. It had a vested interest in asserting that Jews, Muslims, and "pagans" were inferior to Christians—but also in maintaining the possibility of their conversion, a salvation not possible if evil lay in biology rather than the soul.

Gillette indicts the scientific community for its role in creating and perpetuating racism during this period. Its attempts to classify humanity as it had done the rest of the natural world; its advancement of Lamarckian evolution, which seemed to justify biological racism; the extrapolation of Darwinism to social Darwinism; its ideas of biological purity—all of these gave racism a supposedly rational and inarguable basis without which it might not have led to so many murderous events. While scientists who believed themselves to be objective cannot be spared from this criticism, Gillette also points out that "...biologists and other academics found that giving their personal convictions a pseudo-scientific gloss was immensely empowering" for their careers.

However, the responsibility borne by scientists does not lift any blame from philosophers; without the writings of people like Comte Arthur de Gobineau, "the father of European racism," the convictions of those biologists would perhaps not have formed. Gobineau, a French aristocrat "appalled by the political legacy of the French Revolution" was one of the first to argue that miscegenation caused the downfall of European civilization. His "Essay on the Inequality of the Races," written seventy years before fascism formed, is absolutely foundational to the creation of modern race concepts, essentialist differentiation of humans, and the justification of murderous action on that basis. He wrote it in a reactionary attempt to combat the universalizing ideas of the Enlightenment, and was a close friend of Wagner, "the primary source for the German composer's racist worldview." The longer one studies fascism, the more all the points converge. Lombroso's phrenology, used by the police to identify political radicals as well as social criminals, was also popular at the time, and influenced U.S. eugenics laws... which, in turn, served as templates for many of Hitler's genocidal endeavors.

Arendt assigns some amount of blame to Hobbes' philosophy, popular with the colonizers of the time. She says that, rather than *explaining* a pre-existing phenomenon, the advance of Leviathan *depends* upon Hobbes' reduction of human nature into a brutal war of all against all, restrained only by government and class. Within Hobbes' world—not just a theoretical world, but one he has helped to create as one of the realities we sometimes dwell within—commodity alienation and violence over predicates are interrelated with fascism and biopower and modern citizens must be content with all of it. The war of all against all, Arendt points out, "affords the best possible theoretical foundation for those naturalistic ideologies which hold nations to be tribes, separated from each other by nature, without any connection whatever, unconscious of the solidarity of mankind and having in common only the instinct for self-preservation which man shares with the animal world." Essentialism justifies everything. "Imperialism would have necessitated the invention of racism as the only possible 'explanation' and excuse for its deeds, even if no race-thinking had ever existed in the civilized world."

The incoherence of racism is matched only by its social power. It is striking how anti-Semitic caricatures of Jews as weak, incapable, and parasitic—while simultaneously in struggle for world domination and a serious threat to all Aryans—are projections of German and Italian desires and inferiority complexes. By destroying these exterior representation of their own felt inadequacy, these fascists hoped to purify themselves internally as well as externally. We must refuse pity for those who fall into this basic psychological trap when it results in the deaths of millions; understanding need not result in compassion.

The opposite tendency is not one I can support whole-heartedly either. By Griffin's analysis, "[m]eanwhile, all over the world groups of populations are retrenching into their ethnic or cultural identity, many in a spirit of radical intolerance for the equivalent identity of others." Here he makes an equivalency that is false in all societies with a long-standing power inequality between various ethnicities and cultures—it is not the same for an American white person to get interested in their Nordic ancestry as it is for an American black person to explore their ethnic and cultural past, and it is certainly not the same for each of them to feel hostility towards the other. To reduce it in this way is to practice an intentional, racist ignorance of the historical context. However, as someone interested in abolishing the social construct of race, it is hard for me to feel excited about even the most positive manifestations of the tendency to affirm it. Arendt's examination of Benjamin Disraeli, the British Jewish statesman and imperialist, concludes:

> Disraeli's discovery [of race doctrines] is one more proof of how well they serve to combat feelings of social inferiority. For if race doctrines finally served much more sinister and immediately political purpose, it is still true that much of their plausibility and persuasiveness lay in the fact that they helped anybody feel himself an aristocrat who had been selected by birth on the strength of "racial" qualifications... His [Disraeli's] superstitious belief in blood and race—into which he mixed old romantic folk credulities about a powerful supranational connection between gold and blood—carried no suspicion of possible massacres, whether in Africa, Asia, or Europe proper... This willingness to believe [in his race theories] on the part of bourgeois society gave Disraeli, the only Jew of the nineteenth century, his share of genuine popularity. In the end, it was not his fault that the same trend that accounted for his singular great good fortune finally led to the great catastrophe of his people.

Her tone on this last note is not wholly lacking in irony.

There is something willful in the ignorance of racism—something bound-up with power, and the purposes of those with power. In her analysis of the Boer colonization of South Africa and enslavement of the peoples indigenous to the region, Arendt asserts that the Boers were actually unable to perceive those indigenous people as humans, because their way of life was so profoundly different from that of white Europe. "They were, as it were, 'natural' human beings, who lacked the specifically human character, the specifically human reality, so that when European men massacred them they somehow were not aware that they had committed murder." The perception of the oppressor that these Africans were closer to nature than they were somehow never gave those people a higher status... although the oppressor is simultaneously able to condemn others, such as Jews, as *unnatural*. Essentialism is an all-purpose tool for the oppressor.

misogyny

Misogyny, another common manifestation of essentialism, is thickly woven into both German and Italian fascism. From a fascist perspective, modernity is decadence, is weakness, is society, is femininity. To resist it is to embrace virility, a strict enforcement of gender roles, and to valorize women's role as childbearers, a role fascists endowed with a natural connection to the land and biology and transmission of history. Feminists and other "modern women" were seen as absolute enemies, particularly in Germany. Fascist misogyny also led to the gendered mystification of the essential German connection to the land, the gendering of Jews as feminine and Aryans as masculine, and the reification of immanent masculinity as a self-fulfilling force for transcending social reality.

Insofar as women are seen as property in patriarchal societies—and regarded suspiciously by men as the enemy who sleeps beside you—German male fears about German women having sex with Jewish men, thus "contaminating" themselves and the race, were a huge factor in the production of anti-Semitism. (As was also the case in the first several hundred years of black-white interaction in the U.S., the reverse was not considered a serious transgression, because of patriarchy operating on multiple levels.) "The image of the pure, blond, spiritual, feminine German woman succumbing to the love of a Jew became a nightmare to the prophets of the race. A flier distributed at the University of Frankfurt in the early 1920s... declared it a sin, an unnatural act, for an Aryan girl to let herself become enamored of a Jew. It was a transgression tantamount to Eve's succumbing to the sophistry of the serpent."

Almost unfortunately, people are just people. Women were victims of fascism, on many levels: they were murdered in the Shoah,[f] by fascist squads in Italy, and by Mussolini's "adventure" in Ethiopia; they were oppressed by the fascist imposition of strictly gendered roles, denied the ability to pursue self-determination and their own interests; and so on. Women were wildly active in the anti-fascist resistance movements, in assisting Jewish escape, and

f As Giorgio Agamben describes in his text *Remnants of Auschwitz*, the term "Holocaust" was traditionally used by Christians to refer to a burnt sacrifice of Jews they made to God. "Not only does the term imply an unacceptable equation between crematoria and altars; it also continues a semantic heredity that is from its inception anti-Semitic." Following him, I use the word *Shoah*—"Disaster"—throughout this text. I use it to refer not only to the murder, displacement, torture, incarceration, and other genocidal acts performed by Nazis against Jews, but also to the experiences of Roma, queer people, anti-fascists, and others during this era of German concentration camps.

performing many subtle, quotidian gestures of resistance.[g] And, of course, women were also participants in the creation and continuance of fascism, even if they did so in pursuit of other goals. Male misogyny rarely exists for long without the collaboration of some women, who would have been better served (if not immediately or personally) to instead show defiance and solidarity with others who are oppressed.

Homophobia is also a common manifestation of misogyny, and it took some interesting forms during this er a, particularly in pre-fascist Germany. Every war needs its vanguard: in Germany, this force was called the *Bund*,[h] meaning Party. It was created by young men returning home from the defeat of WWI. Some of them perhaps felt guilty for having failed their Volk; more were looking for some identity to fill the void of fighting for a state that had ceased to exist. The Bunden, George Mosse reports, were sometimes formed explicitly on a homoerotic basis—that is, at surface platonic, but as a way to subliminate sexual energy into something "more noble". "Within such a scheme, the homosexually inclined came to be regarded as the most socially creative individual. Because the normal [sic] male directs his total sexual energy and affection toward his family... *Eros* here is essentially captured, circumscribed, and dissipated. This does not hold true for a homosexual, who is able to direct his surplus energy toward cosmic concerns, and, above all, toward cementing the ties of the true Bund." Unfortunately, these homosocial and homosexual experiences did nothing to produce compassion in the hearts of those who murdered thousands of queers in the coming Shoah. Their homosexual experiences and emotions had to remain unarticulated as such to remain accessible to them; and, as we know, the closeted are often the greatest homophobes. Implicit Volkische homosexuality thus became the emotional basis for explicit Nazi homophobia.[i]

Men's enjoyment of each other was seen as a higher form of interaction than that found in mixed-sex company. The Bund was explicitly anti-feminist; by now Jews were gendered female and Aryans male in the popular imagination. Sex and alcohol were excluded from the Bund; physical purity was emphasized, and male beauty celebrated. Nordic body culture began here and spread throughout society, with entire magazines dedicated to the celebration of the naked German male body. This formation served as an alternative to both

g See Ingrid Strobl's book *Partisanas* for an extremely intense account of the militant participation of various women in the anti-fascist struggles of the era.

h Distinct, of course, from the Bund that was an anti-fascist Jewish group in Russian Poland.

i The chapter "Homosexuality and Fascism" in Judith Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* explores both this phenomenon and its upsetting inverse in greater depth.

Marxism and capitalist class society, based neither exclusively on collectivity or individualism, but instead on leadership, Volk, and community. However, the Bunde were intentionally elitist and would not recruit or convert; they did not prove a durable political force, but served as a greenhouse for one.

Ernst Röhm oversaw the murder of many Jews and leftist radicals in the streets as the commander of the SA during Hitler's rise to power; in 1933, his troops forced government officials to surrender power to the Nazis. It was well-known that Röhm, and many of his Storm Trooper leaders, were homosexuals; Hitler excused this as natural to a warrior society. However, Hitler came to see this warrior society as a double-edged sword; he did away with Röhm and other SA leadership in the "Night of the Long Knives" the next year, and shortly afterwards declared homosexuality incompatible with Nazi values.[j] Notoriously, the current neo-fascist band Death in June has argued that the Nazi Party would have been an ethical and stable form of government had the Night of Long Knives not occurred; that Röhm and others in his clique would have steered the Party in a better direction. This is a horrifying read, one that attempts to justify a kinder, gentler fascism… though the band claims that they are not fascist, and points to their gay member Douglas Pearce and collaborations with Jewish artists as evidence. Nevertheless, their heavy use of Nazi imagery and Pearce's blatantly racist statements show their allegiances. The lineage of mystified fascism, supported and enforced by a few people who are its destined enemies, may have begun with Röhm, but it continues today.

Early fascists made other strange essentialist assertions, some of which combined race and gender. The racial theorist Cesare Serano claimed that genetic material stored by women and transmitted to their offspring contained the "psychic experiences and biological adaptations of the past", while men contribute an externally directed and energetic component. This, he felt, justified the claim that Italians had remained racially pure throughout their history, no matter what invasions they suffered. And, "to preserve this essential ability, a civilization has to avoid the feminization of male culture, and retain a gendered division of labor in society." Another Italian racial theorist, Giulio Cogni, claimed that "Men were the intellect of the race; women were the life-givers. But women embodied the nation in a way men never could. In fact, it was through a man's carnal connection with women that he was able to achieve a mystical union with his race." Thus epitomized as the race itself,

j Mussolini, a notable homophobe with concerns about the homosexual appeal of his own charismatic underlyings and the military force that backed them, apparently spoke critically to Hitler about Röhm, influencing his decision.

women were forcibly made one with their role as childbearers and caregivers in a way that morality alone could not achieve. The Nazi propagandist Gregor Strausser asserted: "For a man, military service is the most valuable form of participation in the state—for the woman it is motherhood! There are African tribes where mothers who die in labor are buried with the same honors as warriors who have fallen in battle!" While this appeal to the alleged traditions of "African tribes" may seem strange coming from the mouth of a Nazi, it is entirely consistent with the imperialist racist tendency to appropriate what one wants and kill the rest without remorse.

A biological racist, Serano attempted to bridge the gap between his pseudo-scientific views and what seemed socially necessary by arguing that becoming Christian somehow physically cleansed Jews: "in his veins would begin to flow Aryan blood." These are the sorts of metaphysical leaps necessitated by such strange amalgamations of philosophical and pseudo-scientific arguments. Evola, for example, claimed that history went through gendered cycles: "The noble stages were masculine. Thus... Evola claimed that these stages harmonized with the hierarchical, heroic, warlike, decisive, and classical values that characterized men. The later, degenerate phases were feminine. Societies in these phases indulged in a lust of promiscuity, communism, natural rights, and general equality that were characterized by women." He preferred the masculine cycles, of course; Evola saw Jews (of all genders) and women (of all races) as the most serious threats to the fascist revival.

It is tempting to agree with him. It would be useful if being a member of an oppressed group seen as threatening to those in power meant that group had internal validity, historical unity, and shared values of struggle—but this is also essentialism, however optimistic. Many essentialist feminists have argued along similar lines as Evola, just with more affection for "promiscuity, communism, natural rights, and general equality"—an affection I share myself. Nevertheless, liking something does not make it so, and the only conditions we live in are ones we generate from ourselves and impose upon each other. History and narrative carry real and deadly weight—but they can, just possibly, be refused.

fascist activism: going to the people

Volkische activists started many land projects as a lifestyle choice and a political gesture against modernity and urban life. They represented the search for the middle way between capitalism and Marxism, and a return to the soil as the central source of spiritual sustenance. Certain slogans were common between them—"Free The Land" and "Free The Money" (from immigrants and Jews, that is)—but the projects showed some interesting political variance. "Eden" was probably the most successful: a semi-socialist land project at first, it became Volkische and racist within 20 years of its founding. (It was integrated into the Nazi system, then later into the GDR, and still survives today.) "Mittgart" was a more radically Volkische proposal, an Aryan land project that would be a generator of racial energy. It would have a senate of wise old men who dealt with the outside world, no money or trade, a court of honor for settling grievances, children trained by Volkische means until they were 16, and polygamy. This last point, however, became too controversial for the plan to be adopted. Utopic German settlements were also begun in Africa, Paraguay, and Mexico.

The youth movement was even more successful. It was officially founded in 1901 as a hiking association for schoolboys; by 1911, there were 15,000 members. Its motto was "Youth among itself"—resolutely free of adults and dedicated to the Volkische ideology. They sought to liberate youth from the strictures of modernity through teaching them to identify with nature, in hopes of subverting the existing order. Another motto: "To maintain oneself in spite of all the powers that be." Physical and emotional toughness, and deeds above all else were idealized. At its most militant end lay the *Artamanen*, German youth knights who sought to take back the land from immigrants and industry. The Bund partly grew out of the youth groups, generated by their intensive gender segregation, idealization of masculine beauty and physical prowess, and the charismatic men who led them.

The same creeping ideology spread throughout the schools. At first there were Volkische teachers, then there came Volkische schools; the lessons taught there paved the way for the eventual social reaction to the crisis of German defeat in WWI. Volkische schools became the rule in Germany, not the exception; their very history tests encouraged them to discard Christian perspectives and rely on "love of the homeland" instead. The schools adapted the British public school system (already meant to emphasize nationalism, physical education, and sports) to include freedom for youth and the access to the land necessary to have a whole, vital experience of the Volk. The schools taught their students to believe in German nature and show their dedication

to the welfare of the Volk. As time went on, discrimination against Jews became institutionalized in the schools, with explicitly anti-Semitic officials. By the end, there were no anti-racist faculty in the colleges; at best, teachers remained silent and did not directly participate in anti-Semitic activity.

While the youth movement prepared the ground for the Nazis, they did not care much for each other at first. The youth, especially the Bund, disdained Hitler for his vulgar tastes, fanaticism, and proletarianization of the party. They were critical of Nazis appealing for the votes of the masses and participating in party politics. Nazis, for their part, "criticize[d] the effeteness of the Youth Movement and its ineffectiveness at promoting the revolution." By Mosse's analysis:

> The Nazis also used the appeal of the 'third way,' the opposition to bourgeois society, but they combined this with the building of a mass political party. Moreover the 'German revolution' which they advocated did not become the captive of vague 'experiences' and mystical ecstasies. Instead it was made concrete and brought down to earth—for in their hands the 'German revolution' became an 'anti-Jewish revolution.' The social aims of the Youth Movement were modified by directing the revolution against the 'enemy within' rather than against the existing class structure. Contrary to the hopes of the Youth Movement, the success of the 'German revolution' increased in direct proportion to its diversion into an anti-Jewish revolution.

Still the youth movement and the land projects generalized Volkische core beliefs. The use of such projects for fascists is summarized well in this passage from the sometime-national secretary of the Italian Fascist Party, Achille Starace. He wrote it to direct the mission of a bureau he oversaw that was designed to regulate Italian free time, to make it fall into accordance with the aims of the state:

> Go to the people, to educate them, to raise them, to improve them physically and morally; to encourage them to love their land, their village, their family, their home; to impart the desire to know the true face of the Fatherland by travelling along its roads and pausing with fresh eyes to admire its infinite beauties... Finally, to help them affectionately in every step of their lives, guaranteeing individuals and their families that moral and economic well-being to which the Italian people, renewed by Fascism, have for the first time been granted the right thanks to a new and full understanding of their duties.

Here are two classic elements of fascist rhetoric: blood and soil, and the push for individual-nation-state concordance. If the Italian landscape shapes the Italian people, and the true form of Italian governance and culture is fascism, then it is a noble and sacred duty to align the three—and any divergence is a necessarily bad and malformed thing that ought to be corrected. This is essentialism turned openly political: a self-justifying, self-perpetuating, and fascist line of thought based in assertions about nature. Italian essentialism was always troubled, however, by debate over true Italian ethnicity, resentment about German framing around Italy, and the lack of total conviction in their anti-Semitism. Violence was a necessary emulsifier for this ideological brew.

violence as an end in itself

> We had to have a hot bath of black blood, after so many other tepid baths of maternal milk softened by fraternal tears. We had to have a fine flow of blood... After all we are too numerous. And war takes away a quantity of men who were living because they were born. Among the thousands and thousands of carcasses interlaced in death, all alike in their shrouds, how many are there who would merit, I don't say a tear, but a memory?
>
> —Giovanni Papini in *L'Avanti*, April 6th, 1916

"The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants."

—Thomas Jefferson

When outside observers deplore the violence associated with fascism, they often mention its incivility, its shocking brutality, and its "needlessness." One could gain the impression that they would be heartily in support of a clean, bloodless fascism, so long as its violent acts were rationally demonstrated as necessary. In point of fact, for early fascist movements violence was not simply a messy means to an end but *an end unto itself*. This could not be the case for establishment fascism, which eventually needs to normalize society, which cannot exist in a state of emergency forever without fraying—violence has to be left safely in the past, or put out of sight in the camps. But before the rupture can be healed, it has to first occur, and occur on all levels: the social, emotional, and physical.

The Italian Futurists were perhaps most responsible for the aestheticization of violence, if not for its physical enactment; voyeurs of war, they applauded most acts that broke the social peace. "Futurism disregarded the theories of left and right and created the criteria of authenticity and decadence, future and past, speed and slowness." Warfare was held to be beautiful, authentic, fast, and present. In warfare, genuine camaraderie could be generated, their leader Marinetti held, in fighting against "the sluggish and overbearing hegemony of mediocrity" towards "the Paradise of the Impossible." The Futurists rejoiced in the outbreak of World War I: "the grandiose metaphors of... war as a mystical, orgiastic experience of the Darwinian/Nietzschean principle of Life As Struggle, of war as a cleansing process beneficial and vital for a healthy organism... finally appeared to have become reality." Not only did they think the actual death of millions would be beneficial to the world, the "hygiene" of Social Darwinism in action, they thought the violence itself would be redemptively meaningless. "Although the futurists and the vorticists did not view war and violence as constituting modernity in themselves, they approved of modern war as it was liable to be nihilistic... The redemptive power of destruction and the living force of conflict knew no limits for the futurists. In this, the myth of "modern war" and "heroic technology" provided fuel for the nihilistic temperament of futurism." This line of thought was theoretically derived from the writings of George Sorel, though he himself found Futurism foolish.

Sorel was a French revolutionary syndicalist, heavily influenced by the writing of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, an early anarchist. Sorel believed that the General Strike—a projected time in which all workers would refuse work on capitalist terms, seize the means of production, and enact an anarchist society—was the vital and redemptive myth of his time. He saw violence as a necessary element of the General Strike, and so theorized how a bloodbath might be avoided via the ethics developed between workers. Nevertheless, he saw violence not only as a regrettable means to an end, but as a means of attaining transcendent and revolutionary emotion. "Sorel's 'violence' was not... an appeal to terrorist bloodshed. It was rather a metaphysical principle which found expression in any form of struggle or action. He saw it as a creative force that could be active in artists, inventors, and warriors imbued with individuality and originality and, therefore, a revolutionary mentality." This formulation made his writing ideal for adoption by those influenced by Nietzschean depictions of the Superman—that is, most Futurist and pre-fascist thinkers. "By depicting the economic myth of the general strike in terms of the emotions which accompany adventures in battle, Sorel can maintain that the four attributes of creativity, mystery, struggle, and direct experience

impart to the souls of the workers a sense of the sublime, analogous to the poetic spirit of those periods in history which have experienced a return to barbarism. This feeling of the sublime cannot be analyzed or broken down; separating it into its component parts denatures it. That is why the quality of mystery constitutes perhaps the most important aspect of the general strike."

Unfortunately for all of us, this mysterious and mystical formulation meant that Sorel's ideas on violence were easily lifted free of their containing idea of the General Strike and transported into fascist realms. Mussolini said that everything he was he owed to Sorel: "He is an accomplished master who, with his sharp theories on revolutionary formations, contributed to the molding of the discipline, the collective energy, the massed power of the fascist cohorts." Marinetti adored him; Sorel's ideas are the source for Futurism's ecstatic glorification of violence as an end in itself. While Sorel wavered between returning this appreciation and expressing uncertainty towards the fascist project, perhaps the best evaluation of the compatibility of his ideas with fascism is made within his own theoretical framework. Sorel counterposed the idea of revolutionary violence to the brutality of the State it resisted: "working-class violence must be relatively free from vengeance, jealousy, hatred, and tyrannical bloodletting." Stanley observes that Camus, who was also influenced by Sorel, expressed this necessity in *The Rebel* by forming a distinction between "rebellion, an act of refusal of existing repression, from revolution, which attacks the existing order with both a plan for the future organization and a worked-out theory of historical destiny—usually rooted in the ideology of progress." Fascism fails these tests: it was both brutal—Sorel's test—and "revolutionary", by Camus' standard. The state it enacted in Italy was one based in a sense of both historical destiny and progress (while explaining itself as profoundly anti-progressive.) However sublime the sensation of violence might have felt to its enactors, its outcomes were not noticeably less banal and ugly.

Moreover, Sorel and Mussolini shared, along with many other revolutionists on both the Left and the Right, the conviction that a revolutionary few had the destiny—indeed, the ethical imperative—of shaping the future of the world by manipulating or "educating" the masses. Sorel places the revolutionary subject/actor in the role of master in Nietzsche's master/slave dichotomy; he saw consumers as slaves with weak morality, producer-revolutionaries as masters with heroic qualities ... in an exact demonstration of the sort of valorization of the poor that Nietzsche intended to attack! As I will discuss in a later section, any take on the master/slave formulation is unlikely to be compatible with anti-authoritarian perspectives, and lends

itself better to fascism or statist communism than to freedom. While any are free to act on their own or as a small group by the lights of autonomy, autonomy itself is destroyed once such elites begin to see their mission as one of control over the revolutionary subject. Too, the revolutionary subject often disappoints. People are not their predicates, and often those predicates overlap or contradict; what producer is not also a consumer? The situation is more complicated than that of the parasitic bourgeosie clinging to the back of the proletariat, or the Third World in virtuous revolt against the American Empire.

Importantly, the Volkische conception of the peasant also had to do with an essentialist assertion that the peasant was at home within violence: a ready participant, not a passive observer nor a victim. Volkische authors dwelled upon the peasants who defended themselves during the Thirty Years' War; "the peasants had discovered their aggressive, warlike instincts and broke through the superimposed layer of civilization." Later National Socialists, wishing to bring forth the Nietzschean Superman, saw in this perceived rupture hope for the German people through the enactment of violence: violence as an internal ends as well as an eternal means to accomplishing the purification of the German land and heightening of the German soul. Arendt also points to the idealization of the violence of the mob in the ideology of anti-Semitic French intellectuals who participated in the Dreyfus affair; they "saw in the mob a living expression of virile and primitive 'strength.'" The Futurists, as well, admired the "'noble savage', contemptuous of history"... a fetishization of the 'primitive' Other.

While I find the common assertion that violence is inherently misogynist to be a repulsively sexist reduction itself, I do think the exaltation of virility, particularly when represented in unison with violence, is misogynist. It is no accident that D'Annunzio, the Italian proto-fascist Superman, praised his imagined ancestors for the beautiful women they raped as well as for the glorious battles they fought. Futurism gained its edginess by advocating not only the burning of libraries and art museums, but also scorn for women. It is always so among white men who feel disenfranchised—when striking out in frustration at some handy scapegoat, white femmes and people of color are the nearest targets. We can see it now in the United States: in the men's rights activist scene, in the various online explosions of misogynist hatred, in the murder of women by angry male virgins, in the rhetoric of the alt right. This attitude is the result of a willful misidentification of enemy combined with a sense of betrayed entitlement; it is a hallmark of the abuser as well as of the fascist.

Furthermore, the assertion that violence without context purifies the soul and uplifts its enactor is based in a rejection of the less violent aspects of life—and an assertion that there *are* such non-violent enterprises. In reacting against the home, against femininity, against the "decadence" (a term that cannot but evoke homosexuality, given the popular view of the fall of Rome) that afflicts modern civilization, in assigning blame for alienation and atomization to a vague "culture" rather than to the workings of capitalist, state, and colonial power, this analysis makes invisible the violent exercises of power in all of those realms. It is a case of mistaking a sense of empowerment for real power, and it ignores the often ugly consequences for both the enactors of violence and their victims.

For Sorel, the virtue of conflict lay in the conflict itself—conflict was utopia. "History, according to Sorel, was the history of violence; it is impossible, he believed, to understand history without understanding the role of violence: the positive value of violence, which was characterized by such terms as 'pure', 'idealistic', 'just' and 'purified'." It may be valid to view history as the history of violence, but morally elevating it in this way ignores and obscures how violence is practically administered. While many in struggle of all kinds have found violence inherent to their project, the Sorelian mentality mistakes an awful reality for an end goal. In doing so, it turns its utopia into something uglier than what it was meant to oppose.

II. Religion, myth, and intellectual opportunism

The most important aspect of Sorel's valorization of the General Strike is its mythic nature, not its desirability as a tactic. As Ohana puts it, Sorel's general strike "has no achievable purposes, it has no concrete plan of action and it is not formulated in terms of political action. The general strike is a myth, a series of ideas. It is of little importance if the general strike was partly successful or only a product of the popular fantasy. The importance lies in the infusion of fighting spirit into the proletarian masses and the capitalistic owners. 'I understand that the myth of the general strike astounds many cautious people because of its interminable nature.' Actually, this feature of the general strike underlines its mythical, not its practical nature."

Myth drives people to do what they would otherwise never do, and as the Volkische movement slowly transitioned away from Christianity, it needed replacement myths to avoid becoming simply an alternative lifestyle choice. In the meantime, the movement readily capitalized on Christian anti-Semitism

and "new Chosen People" mentality. Mosse says there was a tendency to "substitute the image of the Volk for the person and function of Christ." Volks revived the Wotan cult, the sun cult, and had a general adoration of "primitivism." (Later, of course, Nazi Germany became obsessed with crypto-Hindu mysticism, as a way of affirming their "Aryan roots.") Novels were used to resurrect and reinvent "the glorious past" of the German people; its modern degeneracy symbolized the death of the Christian God. (Some writers extrapolated Germans' ancient destiny to rule from Tacitus' description of the Goth invasion of Rome—amazing, as Mussolini later justified the Italian destiny to rule on the basis of the Roman Empire.) An influential writer proclaimed that a revolution and defeat of the racial enemy would be a cosmically inspired breakthrough by Aryans. Mosse describes this particularly vivid image: "Many Germans came to see themselves as knights riding bravely between death and the devil." In short, God was in the Germans, the devil in the Jews: the conflict took on the tone of an epic moral battle between good and evil.

For those inclined neither towards Leftist labor myth nor Christianity, several philosophers were available to justify their political drift.

Heidegger

Martin Heidegger may not have been an anti-Semite as a matter of personal belief, but he was certainly a Nazi, at least for the year of 1933. In that time, he glorified the Nazi party and Hitler as Nietzschean Supermen, and schemed with the party to become Rektor of a university, where he promoted party interests. He dismissed all Jewish faculty from the university; reorganized the university governance according to the "Fuhrer" principle; and, variously, hurt or helped "exceptional" Jews who still remained in academia. His wife was a Nazi long before he was, and was an open anti-Semite. During this year of his strongest collaboration, Hannah Arendt, his former lover, asked Heidegger about the rumors that he was a vicious Nazi, and he denied everything. As a prominent intellectual, his support of the party was certainly influential to German opinion—as would have been his denunciation, had he made one.

Heidegger saw the Nazi revolution as "a collective breakout from Plato's cave": an end to the distractions of the modern world and a return to the ecstatic practice of Being that had been lost since the high days of Greece. He "rhapsodized over the spirit and power of the Volk, rooted in soil and blood, their granite will like the mountains of the German countryside", their hearts nourished by German sunshine... He... declared that in the new

Reich the university would take on the task of bringing into reality a new, selfless, hard race of young men and women reflecting the strengths and the will of the new Reich and its chancellor, Hitler, who "alone," he said, "is the present and future German reality and its law.""

Heidegger aspired to the role of chief philosopher of the National Socialist revolution; his retreat to his home, which took place only once it was clear that he had fallen into disfavor, and eventual renunciation of the party, were entirely opportunistic. He covered his initial retreat by saying he needed to be among the Volk rather than living the rarified intellectual life of Berlin, but later claimed he had in fact seen the horrors of Nazism completely and wanted to turn away from the party. It is less necessary to identify Heidegger's crimes than his ethical failings, however: why did he not acknowledge and denounce the events unfolding around him? Why did he not, at the very least, show solidarity to the particular Jews he had known and cared for, such as Arendt?

Heidegger is an excellent example of how one can be fascist without being particularly racist. Arendt famously described the banality of evil Eichmann embodied; perhaps even more banal than a functionary like Eichmann is a conceited academic taking up a cause for personal gain with great excitement while choosing to ignore its implications. For him, to love the Volk was to kill the Jew, even if he refused to acknowledge it. Arendt avoided this sort of trap by refusing to love any *people*, instead loving particular people... and was roundly denounced by Zionists for it later. Nor did she ever trust other intellectuals after the Shoah, and perhaps in particular after Heidegger's betrayal, though she did much to rehabilitate his reputation. "In an interview on German television in the 1960s, Arendt recalled that, while she lived in an intellectual milieu, she also knew ordinary working people, and that it was the intellectuals who were most enthusiastic about cooperating with the regime: 'I never forget that,' she said, 'and when I left Germany I was dominated by the idea: Never again! I shall never again get involved in any kind of intellectual business. I want nothing to do with that lot.'" Nevertheless, she went on to continue to live and work in that milieu, however it disrespected her, out of her need to explore the truth. Heidegger stands as a contrast to her choices, choosing to trust intellectualism over taking an ethical stand. However he valued the Volk, he seems to have primarily loved himself.

Jünger

If Heidegger represents the urge to return to the authentic past within semi-Nazi intellectuals of the time, Ernst Jünger served as the mythic bridge that allowed the Nazis to ideologically journey towards techno-dystopian efficiency and modernity. Jünger, who served in WWI, wrote a bestselling book in Germany between the wars; through this book, he "became the spokesman of the generation of the trenches that had sacrificed all and felt that they had received nothing in return." This disenfranchised veteran class is always a strong constituency of reactionary movements.

Jünger wanted a male community based on warfare experiences. "The war, which produced the new communal masculine relationship, was not seen by Jünger as an experience of the past, a trauma or something unrepeatable, but as an ever-valid model and a creative phenomenon: 'Battle is not only destruction but also the masculine form of creation.'" This is a clear example of the ways in which essentialism is bad for everyone, including men—as women can participate in all acts of destruction, and do so when sexism does not prevent them from such participation, so men can take part in actual acts of creation, rather than sublimating them into warfare. But for Jünger, war experience became central to everything. "From Jünger's point of view, to write articles, poems or stories as if the language itself had not inhaled poisoned air or been pierced by barbed wire was romantic evasion or bourgeois illusion at a time when the very foundations of bourgeois culture had been undermined. Language had become a part of the violent structure of the world." One is reminded of Adorn, who said: "There can be no poetry after Auschwitz."

Jünger, an unrepentent elitist, did not care much for the Nazis because they were populists, used the populist tool of race, and were, by his lights, too liberal. However, he allowed himself to be used by them. Jünger's focus on authenticity allowed for a separation of technology from civilization in proto-Nazi rhetoric, which led to the eventual elevation of technology—mysterious otherwise, if one considers the (at least cosmetically) agrarian roots of Volkische ideology. "According to Adorno, the jargon of 'authenticity' associated technology with spontaneity, experimentation, feelings, blood, will and instinct while civilization was associated with abstraction, intellect, reason and conceptualization." Hitler himself never agreed with the Volkische hostility to technology. Goebbels, his minister of propaganda, said in a 1939 speech at a motor show in Berlin: "While bourgeois reaction was alien to and filled with incomprehension, if not hostility to technology, and while modern

skeptics believed the deepest roots of the collapse of European culture lay in it, National Socialism understood how to take the soulless framework of technology and fill it with the rhythm and hot impulses of our time."

Nietzsche's work was also useful in this separation of technology from the hated modernity; from Sorel to Mussolini and the German conservative revolutionaries, the technological vision was linked to the will to power. A 1930 essay, "National Socialism and Technology: The Spirituality of the National Socialist Movement" argued that racism itself was the necessary element in separating technology from the enemy and making it a part of the Nazi project. "The aim of Nazism was declared to be the liberation of technology from 'the rule of money' and Jewish materialism. Technology was thus not the material foundation of Nazism but an 'independent factor' in a new post-materialist culture." Henry Ford's factory model was praised as "productive capital" and contrasted with "Jewish capital;" later, the Nazi "Bureau for Work-Aesthetics" transformed blue-collar technological workers into a means of suppressing class warfare.

Jünger and Heidegger shared a conception of modern freedom as freedom-to-work. The Nazis claimed that there was a direct connection between the metaphysical significance given to work by thinkers such as Jünger and Heidegger and the performance of work on behalf of Germany. Here one must ask the question: was the inscription on the gates of Auschwitz – *Arbeit macht frei* (Work liberates) – a cynical exploitation of Jünger's thought... or its logical conclusion?

Hitler, Eichmann, and Nazi workplace culture

> The revolt against the Jews rather than against social injustices or economic and political forces was an element in the Volkish thinking which Adolf Hitler was to exploit to the fullest. As a sham revolution, it promised much; above all, it precluded a genuine social upheaval. Thus the Jews were crucial foils. In this context the Volkish movement was bound to become popular: smash the Jewish conspiracy and the Volk will bloom forth unhindered. In fact, the elimination of all Jews would be accepted as a deed of liberation. Hitler plumbed all possibilities, and with devoted, pliable, and acquiescent accomplices even carried out the "anti-Jewish revolution" beyond the belief of those who accepted his promises in *Mein Kampf* at face value.
>
> —George Mosse

The National Socialist Party was a product of that "idealism of deeds" which Volkish thought had always advocated. Later Volkische philosophy had become one of inner revolution and outer expansion—and Hitler seized the moment to urge such expansion. The anti-Semitism that had become integral to the Volkische project was also integral to Hitler's psychological makeup: his anti-Semitism was based in his personal fears, his opposition to the urban life with which Volkism had identified Jews, and his hatred of the "debased elite." But Hitler quite deliberately deployed anti-Semitism as a tactical point of unity, transforming the Volkische tendency, with its Bunden and youth groups and land projects, into a politicized fighting force. "Above all... [the Bund] failed to unite. As we know, Hitler did not make the same mistake. By instituting a social program, making skillful use of propaganda, and training a dynamic leadership, Hitler solved the problem for the Nazis." It took "… the genius of Adolf Hitler to wed the Volkish flight from reality to political discipline and efficient political organization."

This moment of political transformation illustrates the typical makeup of fascist social structure. There is a mass of sympathizers around a core of fanatics, which makes the fanatics feel that they are not fringe radicals, but a brave vanguard backed by an immense force. The sympathizers, meanwhile, translate the fanatic ideas to the mainstream, and appear fairly reasonable, thus acclimating the outside world to fascism such that the interior subculture gradually becomes the exterior world. There is, then, a double enforcement of membership—a sense of normalcy imposed from without, so that one's crimes seem valid, and of complicity and violence within, making it feel impossible to leave without becoming a betrayer (or possibly a victim yourself.) Meanwhile, the cynicism of elite fanatics towards reality as it currently exists moves the whole world towards realizing the elite's preferred fiction.

The National Socialist Party was originally quite anti-bourgeois, but as it became clear that most proletarians were going to stay leftist, Hitler consciously "opted for legitimacy, for the bourgeoisie and against the pernicious forces of the Jewish hydra." On a practical level, building affinity with the powerful gave him funding sources. A racially-divided dual platform was developed as a solution for Nazis, the bourgeois, and the majority of Gentile Germans: the elimination of the bourgeois class—of Jews; the importance of family values—for Aryans, and so on. Many Germans desired a revolution, but not a corresponding shift in social and economic relationships. By stressing a spiritual transformation of the Volk, and making the only victims of the revolution Jews and other undesirables, Hitler strategically utilized the "revolutionary longings and grievances" of Germans to gain power without

destroying capitalism. Hitler's charisma is frequently blamed for his success, but it was far more tactical than magical. "Society is always prone to accept a person offhand for what he pretends to be, so that a crackpot posing as a genius always has a certain chance to be believed... The hair-raising arbitrariness of such fanaticism holds great fascination for society because for the duration of the social gathering it is freed from the chaos of opinions that it constantly generates," Arendt tells us.

While Hitler held his anti-Semitism close, Eichmann, one of the less important of his underlings, did not particularly hate Jews. In fact, Eichmann was converted to Zionism by reading Theoder Herzl's *Der Judenstaat*. After that, he "thought of hardly anything but a 'political solution'... and how to 'get some firm ground under the feet of the Jews.'" To facilitate this emigration, he instituted a process that has since become familiar: "At one end you put in a Jew who still has some property... and he goes through the building from counter to counter, from office to office, and comes out the other end without any money, without any rights, with only a passport on which it says: 'You must leave the country within a fortnight. Otherwise you will go to a concentration camp.'"[k] In Eichmann, the slow bureaucratic horror of biopolitical management matured. He was not opposed to doing things in the interests of (a few) Jews; for example, Jews from Palestine treated with Nazi Germany to "'pick young Jewish pioneers' from among the Jews in the concentration camps;" they then illegally brought them to British-governed Palestine. Eichmann enthusiastically and politely worked with them towards this common goal. For neither party, it seems, was this project incompatible with the existence of the concentration camps.

As Arendt famously pointed out, Eichmann was normal—it is normal to be evil, and, in fact, understanding that proved destablizing for those who examined him. It is this normalcy that is the true horror.[l] Eichmann's only peculiarity, if you can call it that, is a belief that he was right to do only what he was told. Before his trial, Eichmann "proposed to 'hang myself in public as a warning example for all anti-Semites on this earth.' By this he did not mean to say that he regretted anything: 'Repentance is for little children.'" Eichmann saw himself as a perfect idealist, a law-abiding citizen: "[he], like everybody else, had of course his personal feelings and emotions, but he would never permit them to interfere with his actions, if they came into conflict with his 'idea'." Eichmann was the perfect ideologue and the perfect

k This is Arendt's representation of the views of Jewish community leaders whom Eichmann invited to see this process, of which he was proud.

l Agamben makes a similar observation about the games of football that sometimes occurred between inmates and guards in the camps.

functionary, Arendt says, because he lacked empathy. "The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else. No communication was possible with him, not because he lied but because he was safeguarded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such." While this may have been a function of his particular banality, it was facilitated and maintained by Nazi workplace ethics.

Nazis had 'language rules' for talking about their genocide, which served the double purpose of keeping the camps somewhat secret and "the maintenance of order and sanity" within their ranks. "The net effect of this language system was not to keep these people ignorant of what they were doing, but to prevent them from equating it with their old, 'normal' knowledge of murder and lies." Similarly, some Gentile Germans became (or claimed to have become, when guilt was being measured out after the end of the war) "inner emigrants:" those who secretly disbelieved in the Nazi program, and lived as strangers among their own people... but only in terms of their private, inner lives. At most they withdrew slightly from public life; some took the opposite tack, pretending to be "more Nazi than the Nazis" to preserve their own safety. This sort of doublethink goes along with the above doubletalk—at what point is pretense not simply reality? "...[I]dentification with the movement and total conformism seems to have destroyed the very capacity for experience, even if it be as extreme as torture or the fear of death." Until the spell was broken—at which point everyone *knew* that the Nazi project was insane and evil—everyone *knew*, and could not learn otherwise, that it was the correct course of action.

Hitler's fascism channeled bourgeois dissatisfaction; it was mystical, unrealistic, and positive. "Fascism was far from being purely nihilistic [meaning *destructive*]: indeed, the discovery of a positive ideology was what enabled some fascists to succeed while their more negative confreres failed." Its mysticism was no barrier; rather, it greased the wheels of material interest by creating a collaborative, homogenizing fiction. "The success of totalitarian propaganda, however, does not rest so much on its demagoguery as on the knowledge that interest as a collective force can be felt only where stable social bodies provide the necessary transmission belts between the individual and the group; no effective propaganda based on mere interest can be carried on among masses whose chief characteristic is that they belong to no social or political body, and who therefore present a veritable chaos of individual interests."

Arendt describes the "lying world of consistency" established by Nazi ideology: something *better*, more comforting than reality itself, that both justified horrors and cushioned adherents from them. This fiction, this myth, generated a world of terror. For example, Hitler created a narrative of "a class struggle caused by the Jewish businessman who exploits his workers, while at the same time his brother in the factory courtyard incites them to strike." This picture simultaneously defangs class struggle as a worthy enterprise and directs class resentment from the poor and fear from the bourgeoisie against the fictional machinations of the Jews. In this way, Arendt says, "The assumption of a Jewish world conspiracy was transformed by totalitarian propaganda from an objective, arguable matter into the chief element of the Nazi reality; the point was that the Nazis *acted* as though the world were dominated by the Jews and needed a conspiracy to defend itself." Similarly, the entirely fictional "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," which continue to inspire racist conspiracy theories today, at once generated and mirrored the real aims of the Nazis. Arendt observes that the Nazi slogan "Right is what is good for the German people" is remarkably similar to the Protocols' "Everything that benefits the Jewish people is morally right and sacred." Fiction affects its author most of all. This was obvious in Eichmann's trial: "Eichmann needed only to recall the past in order to feel assured that he was not lying and that he was not deceiving himself, for he and the world he lived in had once been in perfect harmony."

The self-creating prophecy of the Nazis was incredibly material:

> The offical SS newspaper, the *Schwarze Korps*, stated explicitly in 1938 that if the world was not yet convinced that the Jews were the scum of the earth, it soon would be when unidentifiable beggars, wthout nationality, without money, and without passports crossed their frontiers. And it is true that this kind of factual propaganda worked better than Goebbels' rhetoric, not only because it established the Jews as scum of the earth, but also because the incredible plight of an ever-growing group of innocent people was like a practical demonstration of the totalitarian movements' cynical claims that no such thing as inalienable human rights existed and that the affirmations of the democracies to the contrary were mere prejudice, hypocrisy, and cowardice in the face of the cruel majesty of a new world.

First, the stateless are deprived of home and of government protection; then, once they are actually rendered superfluous, they can be killed with impunity. This was one of the points of concentration camps; had Nazis simply rounded up all the Jews and shot them in the millions, civilized people might have protested. "...before they [the Nazis] set the gas chambers into motion they had carefully tested the ground and found out to their satisfaction that no country would claim these people. The point is that a condition of complete rightlessness was created before the right to live was challenged."

This process of dehumanization also took place on the ground level. The camps began as bullying fantasies brought to life, Arendt says, which at first simply employed pre-existing sadists; then they were systematized, and used to make humans into the SS. One guard reported, "Usually I keep on hitting until I ejaculate. I have a wife and three children in Breslau. I used to be perfectly normal. That's what they made of me. Now when they give me a pass out of here, I don't go home. I don't dare look my wife in the face." In this way, differences are destroyed on both levels—not to say that the damage done to the guards is at all comparable to the suffering of their victims, but to say the Nazi goal was the systematic destruction of difference on all fronts: the conversion of people into mechanical sadists beating dehumanized flesh. This is not so different from Achille Mbembe's analysis of the libidinal nature of slavery in his theory of necropolitics, explored at length in a later chapter. Necropolitics was not invented in the Shoah, but certainly bloomed full and heavy in the camps. Arendt may not have realized its lack of originality, but her analysis otherwise stands: "If we take totalitarian aspirations seriously and refuse to be misled by the common-sense assertion that they are utopian and unrealizable, it develops that the society of the dying established in the camps is the only form of society in which it is possible to dominate man entirely. Those who aspire to total domination must liquidate all spontaneity, such as the mere existence of individuality will always engender, and track it down in its most private forms, regardless of how unpolitical and harmless these may seem."

The urge for consistency destroys difference and human dignity.

This is an incredibly important aspect of fascism, which claims, after all, to realistically cope with difference—Jews are subhuman, and must be exterminated; Mexicans are criminals and rapists, and cannot be allowed across our borders. This aspect of fascism is memorably presented in Madeline L'Engle's fictional work, *A Wrinkle in Time*:

> "But that's exactly what we have on Camazotz. Complete equality. Everybody exactly alike."
> For a moment her brain reeled with confusion. Then came a moment of blazing truth. "No!" she cried triumphantly. "Like and equal are not the same thing at all!"
> ...But Charles Wallace continued as though there had been no interruption. "In Camazotz all are equal. In Camazotz everybody is the same as everybody else," but he gave her no argument, provided no answer, and she held on to her moment of revelation.
> *Like and equal are two entirely different things.*

If you are skeptical of the value of a young adult novel to the anti-fascist project, consider: when we are programmed as children to hate and fear the Other, whatever form that Other might take, it is sometimes only the critical tools provided by the liberatory mythologies of our youth that allow us to counter these arguments as adults. This is a very real challenge. Using a tone of prophetic science, Hitler got people to think of his project as one extending over millennia, which meant that the immediate atrocities were justified; those who murdered Jews were made to believe that what they were doing was a grand, historic task. Himmler said, "To have stuck it out and, apart from exceptions caused by the human condition, to have remained decent, that is what has made us hard. This is a page of glory in our history which has never been written and is never to be written." Their work was deliberately framed as unrelated to everyday cruelty, to which of course all civilized Germans were opposed. The gas chambers were glossed as "mercy killing"; in fact, some Germans were angry that the gas was being wasted on the Jews, when it ought to be preserved for Gentile Germans in case of Allied victory. To counter this ideology, a completely different worldview is necessary, something beyond pointing out the speciousness of its claims. And, when the fascist project has gone beyond the theoretical phase and into its next, murderous era, Arendt offers us a practical way to oppose such mystical doublethink: "Hitler... spoke of 'dying classes' that ought to be eliminated without much ado.' ...The only valid argument under such conditions is promptly to rescue the person whose death is predicted."

failed explanations

Wilhelm Reich, in his popular early study *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, shows both an oppositional understanding of fascism, and his own neuroses and unexamined tendencies towards essentialist ways of thinking. While few Leftists would dispute that modern sexuality is malformed by patriarchy, and that this malformation contributes to many negative social forms and interactions in unspoken ways, it is a large stretch to argue, as Reich does, that it is the primary root of fascist tendencies. Moreover, Reich's essentialist understanding of gendered societies—and, in particular, his pathologizing of transgressive sexualities—irredeemably poisons his arguments from their start. His analysis seems to be more a diagnosis of his own sexual and mental difficulties than a realistic analysis of the motives behind fascism. He is not wrong that fascists were (and are) neurotics obsessed with "curing" the external factors they found responsible for the sorry state of the world—he just also shares this condition. His belief that sexual liberation will solve most of humanity's problems has not borne fruit, and must be uprooted.

Reich opposes the mysticism of racial purity: "such views are unequivocally mystical: nature 'wills' and 'regulates.' They are the logical continuation of biological metaphysics." This racism justifies imperialism; it was Hitler's view that humanity is divided into three kinds of races: those who establish culture, those who develop culture, and those who destroy culture. These mystical views do not stay strictly theoretical. "*By forming ideologies, people change themselves; the process of ideology formation has a material core.*" The fascists theorized a war of political (the Jewish materialism of Marx) and racial pollution versus mysticism and the purity of German blood and land. As Hitler put it: "Race is the outer world of the soul." By Reich's analysis, such essentialist mysticism is necessary to the fascist drive, and must be undone by humanistic science.

Despite this basis of understanding, Reich falls into his own mysticism, that of the orgone (the orgasmic energy he believed is unconsciously transmitted between sexual participants) and sex-economy; and, most relevantly, that of matriarchal nature. He sees matriarchy as the organization of the sex-economically-natural society, and patriarchy as the authoritarian and catastrophically chaotic society built upon the perverted sex impulse. From a position that opposes all gendered power and does not take a conveniently reductionist view of history, this is not useful. Furthermore, he does not problematize pagan mysticism as he does Christian and crypto-mysticism: "The mysticism of the sex-affirming matriarchal primitive [sic] is not due to sexual suppression as is the mysticism of the patriarchal individual. It is in

part immediate orgiastic experience and in part animistic interpretation of natural processes." He observes: "Fascist ideology (in contrast to Christian ideology) separates human orgiastic longing from the structure created by the authoritarian patriarchy and assigns it to various races: '*Nordic*' is equivalent to *bright, heavenly, exalted, pure, asexual*; '*Asiatic*' to *instinctual, demonical, ecstatic, sexual, orgiastic*." While we concur about the evolution of patriarchy and the governance of sexuality as an economic measure, and Reich correctly disassociates the construct of sexuality from raced imaginings (made one in many racist ideologies), he still gives credit to the mythology around "natural" forces in human society as a historical narrative of this shift, opposing patriarchal civilization to "barbaric" matriarchy's sensuality. To critique mysticism, he uncritically relies upon another mystical standpoint: he offers no explanation to back his claims that matriarchal societies are healthier, do not produce raced or gendered violence, and are natural; he does not even cite evidence (though it exists) that they do/have existed. This tendency to uncritically exalt matriarchy as a natural form of organization continues within certain nature-reifying, essentialist efforts of today, examined in section 4 of this text.

Reich saw the formation of "healthy" sexuality as the most necessary development for the eradication of fascism. He opposes this healthy sexuality to that formed under Christianity, which is capitalized upon to reinforce fascist mysticism (honor, love of land and nation, sexual morality, duty.) Reich believed that Christian sexual suppression in the adolescent makes them vulnerable to mysticism, which in turn opens them to fascism. Mysticism's purpose is to divert attention from daily misery with the belief in the afterlife, thus rending materialism irrelevant and otherwise ludicrous struggles reasonable. "Both patriarchal family attitudes and mystical attitudes are the basic mass-psychological elements of fascist and imperialist nationalism." The mother fixation created by Christian morality translates directly into the homeland feeling.

These tendencies work best, Reich says, on sexually repressed, "unpolitical" people (code for "the masses") who are not passively apolitical but actively so, as a defense against social responsibility. They are easily swayed by mysticism... and deviant sex, which seems to momentarily resolve their inner conflicts. Religious people, unable to express their sexuality in healthy ways, become oversexed and perverted. "Happiness in this world is not only unattainable for him, but it does not even seem desirable to him." Hence, true Christians have no room for materialism; instead, they form a dedication to impossible, otherworldly goals that work against their personal interests.

Religion, politics, and mystical nationalism become the arousing agent, rather than ordinary sexual possibilities. Masochism, Reich says, comes from the desire to enjoy pleasure without feeling guilt; if one is punished and then forced to feel pleasure, it is is guilt-free. "Here lies the root of *the ideology of passive suffering* which is part of all patriarchal religions." The conscious longing is for a delivery from sin, the unconscious longing is for a delivery from sexual tension. "The religious individual negates his sexuality by mystifying the excitation... Religious feeling is subjectively genuine and has a physiological basis. The negation of the sexual nature of these excitations results, characterologically, in insincerity... The structure of the patriarchal individual... is molded by sexual suppression." All of this begins when children are made to feel guilty and sinful for masturbating, and referred to God for forgiveness. Reich also analyzes the Virgin Mary cult: "While the Jesus cult mobilizes the passive homosexual forces against genitality, the Virgin Mary cult utilizes forces from the heterosexual sphere itself: 'Do no harm to a girl and remember that your mother, too, was once a girl.'" Conceiving of all women as your mother, combined with the incest taboo, redirects the sexual energy of the man (straight, Reich tellingly fails to note—he has something more particular to say about gay men) into mystical energy.

Reich says that mysticism must be fought materially, ideologically and culturally, but primarily on a sexual basis, since sexuality carries such emotional weight; that's why the church chose that ground to fight on. Opposing this Christian programming is the political project Reich sees for therapists, to show people the contradiction in their thoughts; the "task is that of *making conscious the conflict and the suffering* in the suppressed mass individual." The youth should be targeted with this approach, it is they who matter... and, in a prelude to the sexual revolution, "youth is no longer on a mass basis accessible to a sex-negating ideology." German fascism also worked to win the youth base:

> To do this, it had at its disposal no other means than the creation and the nurturing of submissiveness to authority the basic prerequisite of which is an ascetic, sex-negative upbringing. The natural sexual strivings for the other sex, strivings which from infancy on urge for gratification, were replaced partly by homosexual and sadistic strivings, partly by asceticism. There was, for instance, the "spirit of comradeship in the work service camps, and the cultivation of the so-called "spirit of discipline and self-sacrifice." These measures served the purpose of mobilizing sadistic brutality to be utilized in the imperialistic war. *Sadism derives from unsatisfied orgiastic longing.*

This analysis stands in brutal contrast to the experience described by the concentration camp guard, above, who felt he had a healthy sex life until it was deformed by the redirection of his sexual energy into violence. Reich argues the reverse. In this theorizing of sexual deviance, Reich's contradictory and personally complicated relationship to sexuality is laid bare. He claims that patriarchy's governance of sexuality as something filthy and perverse has in fact made it filthy and perverse. Nor is his opposition to deviant sexualities limited to sadomasochistic impulses; he also opposes homosexuality. He uses this analysis to reinforce a view of sexual deviancy as an unnatural development of civilization; it is to our advantage as homosexuals today that the gay tendencies of the Bund I previously described were not known to him, to be further theorized in these directions. (The Bund themselves might be pleased by the Platonic comparison, but horrified at their implication in modernity—surely the fault of the essentially feminine Jew, not the virile Aryan!) These arguments flow directly from his belief in some essentially healthy, natural way to perform sexuality—some way, that is, that is no longer a performance but authentic reality—to which society can and must return. That belief is not only something I find fundamentally untrue, but serves to justify his hatred of those he finds unnatural.

Reich asserts:

> The adolescent develops a passive homosexual attitude. From the point of view of the dynamics of instinct, passive homosexuality is the most effective force against natural masculine sexuality, for it replaces activity and aggression by passive and masochistic attitudes, by the attitudes, in other words, which determine the structural basis of patriarchal authoritarian mysticism... the mass psychology of the followers [of a religion]: moral—and often definitely physical—masochism and physical submission. Religion derives its power from the suppression of genital sexuality, which, secondarily, produces passive and masochistic homosexuality.

He later claims, meaning it as an insult, that in the fully developed patriarchy of Greek democracy, "the men's rule of the Platonic age is definitely homosexual." In this negative depiction of the "passive homosexual" as the perfect citizen—emasculated, unable to assert his rights or connect fully to others—Reich's contradictions, assumptions, and essentialism are at their worst. Sadly, he is not alone in these endeavors; Adorno, who always had too much to say, famously asserted that "homosexuality and totalitarianism belong together."

Women are not excluded from Reich's homophobic, essentialist analysis.

> Courtesans are women who rebel against the yoke of compulsive marriage and insist on their right to sexual self-determination. This demand, however, is in conflict with their early education which made them incapable of full sexual experience. Therefore, the courtesan engages in all kinds of adventures in order to escape her homosexuality, or she continues to be torn between the two strivings. The male counterpart is the homosexuality of the men who escape from compulsive marriage to the courtesan or homosexual boys and thus try to restore their capacity for sexual experience.

No doubt Reich would feel confirmed in this analysis by the increasingly complex queer relationships of today, which, for those of us involved in them, feel not pathological but liberating. The sexual revolution Reich called for was, however, a temporary opening rather than an entirely revolutionary and healing rupture. James Baldwin writes, reflecting on the impact Reich's work on sexual liberation and the orgone had on the time:

> In retrospect, the discovery of the orgasm—or, rather, of the orgone box—seems the least mad of the formulas that came to hand. It seemed to me ... that people turned from the idea of the world being made better through politics to the idea of the world being made better through psychic and sexual health like sinners coming down the aisle at a revival meeting. And I doubted that their conversion was any more to be trusted than that. The converts, indeed, moved in a certain euphoric aura of well-being. Which would not last... There are no formulas for the improvement of the private, or any other, life—certainly not the formula of more and better orgasms. (Who decides?) The people I had been raised among had orgasms all the time, and still chopped each other with razors on Saturday nights.

We have also witnessed moments of revolutionary queer struggle since Reich wrote, defying his depiction of the homosexual as the perfectly governed, passive subject. (And we could, though it would be a newly essentialist claim, profane his argument, reading it backwards to argue for the "passive homosexual" as the revolutionary subject in the war against "natural masculine sexuality"—tops down, bottoms up!) Obviously, sexual repression has something to do with fascism, and you could argue that the people most likely to be fascist today are the most sexually repressed... but one cannot argue the inverse. As a generalization, Reich's analysis quickly

becomes repulsive. I think Reich is right in saying that unhealthy psychological structures are fundamental to fascist thinking, but it is a terrible reduction to say it is all because of repressed sexuality. Fascism should not be reduced to a pathology any more than it should be reduced to a coincidence of historical factors. If one must attempt the project, I suggest the key element of fascist psychology was instead one of self-hating insecurity, either within themselves, against their subculture, or against their society in general. The Italian fascist intellectual Giovanni Papini said, for example:

> ...nothing great can be made with shit. Italy of 1860 had been shit dragged kicking and screaming towards unification by a daring minority, and shit it remained throughout fifty years of unification, urged on by the occasional outbursts of zeal from small minorities either in favor of an imperial mission in Africa or of a liberating transformation in its domestic politics. We are a country of botched attempts: everything is tried and nothing comes off.

Wilhelm Reich rails against his detractors similarly in his epic polemic "Listen, Little Man." For the crime of refusing to believe that orgasmic energy could cure cancer, he accuses his opponents of a petty small-mindedness that is as outwardly destructive as it is inwardly; he does not shy away from comparing them to fascists. Yet, in his own life, Reich seems to have expressed the same small-minded, repressed tendencies: for all his talk of the socially redemptive power of sexual liberation, he pressured three of his partners to have unwanted abortions. The origin of his neuroses and fixation on painful sexuality is not obscure; Reich had an Oedipal relationship with his mother, and a brutal and sadistic father, who made frequent unwanted advances to other women. Reich began having sexual experiences at the age of four, and first had sexual intercourse when he was 11. When he was 13, he discovered his mother having sex with one of his tutors. When he told his father, he reacted so abusively that Reich's mother eventually committed suicide, for which Reich blamed himself. When Reich was 17, his father died, possibly intentionally out of guilt for his wife's death; Reich also felt responsible for that death.

This is a terribly unfortunate history. Most people are motivated to pursue particular studies for personal reasons, and should not be faulted for that; analysts are deluding themselves if they claim to speak with any sort of objectivity. However, Reich's extrapolation of his own sexual and emotional trauma onto society tragically served to obscure the real gold in his analysis: the naming of *character armor*. We are all little men, Reich averred; each of us

has a little Hitler inside our hearts. We are damaged by the world, and unable to fulfill our desires, and so we become neurotic, abusive, fascist. We can see a nesting series of these insecurities everywhere in what we have discussed: German insecurity contributed to Italian insecurity, both of which gave rise to fascism. Reich's analysis of the sexually dysfunctional basis of fascism betrays his own sexual insecurities, which gave rise to bad behavior in his personal life, the loss of his professional reputation, and a long series of failed experiments with insane machines and discredited therapeutic techniques. Also, all parties under discussion had a Messiah complex: all thought they could save humanity from whatever they perceived as the greatest ill. "In his last decades, he [Reich] became persuaded that he was called to bear the burdens for a sexually starved and sadistic human race and that he could point the way toward a new humanity if only his healing message could be heard." The same could be said for fascist idealists.

While I don't see sexuality as a primary resource for fascism, I think an interesting analysis of the fascist relationship to sexuality could be made. Foucault, a man much more at home in his "perversions"[m] than Reich, had this to say:

> While it is true that the analytics of sexuality and the symbolics of blood were grounded at first in two very distinct regimes of power, in actual fact the passage from one to the other did not come about (any more than did these powers themselves) without overlappings, interactions, and echoes. In different ways, the preoccupation with blood and the law has for nearly two centuries haunted the administration of sexuality. Two of these interferences are noteworthy, the one for its historical importance, the other for the problems it poses. Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, the thematics of blood was sometimes called on to lend its entire historical weight toward revitalizing the type of political power that was exercised through the devices of sexuality. Racism took shape at this point (racism in its modern, 'biologizing', statist form): it was then that a whole politics of settlement, family, marriage, education, social hierarchization, and property, accompanied by a long series of permanent interventions at the level of the body, conduct, health, and everyday life, received their color and their justification from the mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood and ensuring the triumph of the race. Nazism was doubtless the most cunning and the most naive (and the former because of the latter) combination of

m By Reich's lights, Foucault was a prime candidate for fascism, as a homosexual and sexual masochist. Foucault's life and politics alone gives Reich's argument the lie.

> the fantasies of blood and the paroxysms of a disciplinary power. A eugenic ordering of society, with all that implied in the way of extension and intensification of micro-powers, in the guise of an unrestricted state control, was accompanied by the oneiric exaltation of a superior blood; the latter implied both the systematic genocide of others and the risk of exposing oneself to a total sacrifice. It is an irony of history that the Hitlerite politics of sex remained an insignificant practice while the blood myth was transformed into the greatest blood bath in recent memory.

Reich fails to suggest anything half so compelling. His failure, in the end, is to seduce.

the apocalypse has always been with us

Arendt argues that the impulse towards joining fascist movements was inspired by the contradictions and misery of capitalism and the modern nation-state—that these will almost *inevitably* give birth to fascism, if there is no coherent alternative proposal.

> If we compare this generation with the nineteenth-century ideologists, with whose theories they sometimes seem to have so much in common, their chief distinction is their greater authenticity and passion. They had been more deeply touched by misery, they were more concerned with the perplexities and more deadly hurt by hypocrisy than all the apostles of good will and brotherhood had been. And they could no longer escape into exotic lands, could no longer afford to be dragon-slayers amongst strange and exciting people. There was no escape from the daily routine of misery, meekness, frustration, and resentment embellished by a fake culture of educated talk; no conformity to the customs of fairy-tale lands could possible save them from the rising nausea that this combination continually inspired. This inability to escape into the wide world, this feeling of being caught again and again in the trappings of society... added a constant strain and the yearning for violence to the older passion for anonymity and losing oneself.

Arendt is often described as a self-hating Jew, a victim-blamer, for her analysis of the role some Jewish community and religious leaders played in their cooperation with the Nazis. I find her, rather, to be making an argument about the role authority figures often play for any oppressed group in their negotiation with the world. By Arendt's analysis, "...if the Jewish people had

really been unorganized and leaderless, there would have been chaos and plenty of misery but the total number of victims would hardly have been between four and a half and six million people." Furthermore, she sees the "moral collapse of respectable Jewish society" as rooted in these leaders' tacit agreement to the creation of privileged categories—that, by allowing a few Jews to be taken away in the name of saving the many, they implicitly accepted the idea that some Jews deserved to die more than others. This served to undermine the possibility of solidarity among those who were privileged today but doomed to die tomorrow, and promoted the idea of survival at any ethical cost.

I think the acceptance and enforcement of essential categories, not to mention the dictates of any sort of leaders, will always undermine the survival efforts of oppressed people, and serve the intentions of the oppressor. I believe we should resist any efforts made to form us into a mass—that is, an undifferentiated group of people, whose only important attribute is that we are not the Other, not the enemy—and recognize and celebrate our differences without letting them solidify into a new means of control. And, if we find ourselves becoming a homogenous group of any sort, we should force ourselves to become uncomfortable, to refuse the familiar. Many of us organizing against racism in the US in recent years have watched in horror as well-intentioned "white allies" drift more and more into the abyss of white identity—there is something destructive about recognizing the definitions of race enough to actually segregate yourself, no matter your intentions. Valorization of the gay elite, and of a certain kind of relationship to the land, deserve a special callout for their current popularity in modern U.S. radical Left circles. While I do not think either is necessarily fascist, their manifestations in pre-Nazi Germany show us that they are not necessarily practices of freedom either.

Arendt also points out that essentialism engenders a false sense of security—if we "know" certain basic truths about how people of a category will always behave, we trust in the predictability of stories someone else wrote about how the world will operate. The Shoah changed that. "The tragic fallacy of all these prophecies, originating in a world that was still safe, was to suppose that there was such a thing as one human nature established for all time, to identify this human nature with history, and thus to declare that the idea of total domination was not only inhuman but also unrealistic. Meanwhile we have learned that the power of man is so great that he really can be what he wishes to be."

We must also resist the urge to measure our deserved power or authority by our losses. While Jewish history is full of pogroms, expulsions, and role enforcement, there had always been, according to Arendt, the belief that "the people of Israel shall live; individual Jews, whole Jewish families might die in pogroms, whole communities might be wiped out, but the people would survive." The Shoah shook that belief to its core, creating a far-compounded trauma of a different magnitude than the longstanding trauma experienced by Jews across centuries. That is tremendous. However: Harry Mulisch, the great Dutch writer (whose mother was a Jew, but whose family largely escaped the gas chamber because of his father's collaboration with the Nazis), mused: "Would the death of the Jews have been less of an evil if they were a people without a culture, such as the Gypsies [sic] who were also exterminated?" He concluded that it would not have been, but it's a hell of a question to pose if one considers the possible perspectives of Roma. Today, marginalized communities in the United States are often treated as if they have no particular culture "worth saving"; people talk of "getting back to the land" as if urban relationships to the land are meaningless; "exemplary immigrants", people of Asian and Indian descent, are exoticized and ignored in turn. We must refuse these divisions. And, importantly for our current situation, Arendt traces the origin of the police state to their management of stateless peoples:

> The nation-state, incapable of providing a law for those who had lost the protection of a national government, transferred the whole matter to the police. This was the first time the police in Western Europe had received authority to act on its own, to rule directly over people; in one sphere of public life it was no longer an instrument to carry out and enforce the law, but had become a ruling authority independent of government and ministries. Its strength and its emancipation from law and government grew in direct proportion to the influx of refugees. The greater the ratio of stateless and potentially stateless to the population at large... the greater the danger of a gradual transformation into a police state... That the Nazis eventually met with so disgracefully little resistance from the police in the countries they occupied, and that they were able to organize terror as much as they did with the assistance of these local police forces, was due at least in part to the powerful position which the police had achieved over the years in their unrestricted and arbitrary domination of stateless [people] and refugees.

The call for resistance on all of these fronts is not only ethically but practically vital. There were in fact many who refused to cooperate with the Nazis; whether or not they survived, they give the lie to the idea that resistance would have been impossible.[n] It is also worth recalling that the government will almost always side with the fascists in the end; in 1920s Germany, as in Italy, the anarchists and Communists faced police repression, while fascist efforts were either ignored or directly supported by the police and military. As an SA slogan held: "Possession of the streets is the key to power in the State." And, even if you cannot win or hold the streets, breaking consensus is a meaningful gesture. Discussing widespread, socially supported resistance to the Nazi program in Denmark,[o] Arendt states: "It is the only case we know of in which the Nazis met with open native resistance , and the result seems to have been that those exposed to it changed their minds. They had met resistance based on principle, and their 'toughness' had melted like butter in the sun, they had even been able to show a few timid beginnings of genuine courage. That idea of 'toughness,' except, perhaps, for a few half-demented brutes, was nothing but a myth of self-deception, concealing a ruthless desire for conformity at any price..."

Even if the odds are dramatically stacked against the success of resistance, it challenges the notion of universal agreement with fascist principles in a way that can have a significant impact. It was the lack of such resistance and Nazi belief in group consensus that made the "Final Solution" possible; "[a]s Eichmann told it, the most potent factor in the soothing of his own conscience was the simple fact he could see no one, no one at all, who actually was against the Final Solution." Those who did show their opposition seem to have made a powerful impression on those around them. Even for the intended victims, resistance was the most tactically viable solution; those interned primarily as "belligerents", or who were never captured at all because they fought back, were far more likely to survive. Under totalitarian regimes, terror increases in inverse proportion to the amount of resistance it actually faces.

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n The most resistance to the rise of the Nazis within Germany came from the Right, but most of these believed that a German civil war would be a great disaster(!), and so held back

o We know of many more examples, though Arendt may have not; but Danish resistance was remarkably widespread, and supported at least in part by the government.

Finally, we must preserve our ability to remember and mourn our dead, and fight for a world in which both their choices and ours are real ones. Attacking these elements of human experience was an innovation of the fascists. "His death merely set a seal on the fact that he had never really existed... Totalitarian terror achieved its most terrible triumph when it succeeded... in making the decisions of conscience absolutely questionable and equivocal. When a man is faced with the alternative of betraying and thus murdering his friends or of sending his wife and children, for whom he is in every sense responsible, to their deaths; when even suicide would mean the immediate murder of his own family—how is he to decide? Who could solve the moral dilemma of the Greek mother who was allowed by the Nazis to choose which of her three children should be killed?"

When our enemies give us such choices, our only possible response is communal defiance.

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"But that's exactly what we have on Camazotz. Complete equality. Everybody exactly alike."

For a moment her brain reeled with confusion. Then came a moment of blazing truth. "No!" she cried triumphantly. "Like and equal are not the same thing at all!"

...But Charles Wallace continued as though there had been no interruption. "In Camazotz all are equal. In Camazotz everybody is the same as everybody else," but he gave her no argument, provided no answer, and she held on to her moment of revelation.

Like and equal are two entirely different things.

Chapters, posters, and additional material may be found at unquietdead.tumblr.com

The Unquiet Dead

Anarchism, Fascism, and Mythology

2. Conflict and Complicity:
early Italian anarchists and fascists

Fascists and anarchists have been enemies for nearly a century... but that was not always the case. Before Italian fascism[a] was clearly the horror it became, many anarchists converted to fascism, or found common cause with its followers; and fascism drew inspiration from anarchists for some of its more interesting early experiments. Anarchists and fascists reacted against the same material conditions, and had many shared negative goals in the short term, though deeply conflicting positive goals. A decade later, anarchists fought fascists in the Spanish Civil War, as we discuss in the next section, and have done so in many other places and times. How did things change? How could such bitter enemies have ever been complicit in each other's development?

context

Italy was formally unified as a nation in 1861. As in Germany, this unification was meant to create a national identity and shared sense of purpose for all the formerly disparate regions. However, heavy taxation dispirited its population, and when Italy tried to join other European powers in colonizing Africa, the country found it had come too late to the game to do so very successfully. Neither social unity at home through economic security, nor imperial adventures that might have affirmed national unity, ultimately proved possible.[b]

a While it is common practice to capitalize "fascist" and related words when referring to Mussolini's party and state, to distinguish them from the general phenomenon and ideology, I have chosen to leave it uncapitalized, except when quoting. I do not care to legitimize fascism in even stylistic terms.

b However, the Italian army murdered 275,000 Ethiopians during its attempt; less than a third of these people were combatants. This stands as one of the greatest atrocities committed by Italian fascism, but it is also typical of European colonialism of the period just before—and, arguably, today, though it may present itself in different forms. Earlier Italian colonialism also established the national boundaries of Eritrea, combining several independent kingdoms, to the continued detriment of its population today.

After a short series of corrupt conservative governments, a moderate, Giolotti, took control. He was able to level out the economy and reduce class tensions... which did not win him favor from either the far Left or the far Right. Nationalists wanted Italy to pursue imperialism, and socialists and anarchists resented how the moderates among them were bought off by participation in Giolotti's government, which all saw as a corrupt oligarchy of the rich. This resentment forms half the backdrop for both the building intensity of struggle on the left and the eventual success of fascism on the right; the other half was painted by the mass of veterans returning from WWI, some of them politicized and all of them angry. The idea of the true Italy, the vital part of the nation, at once the common spirit of the masses and the agenda of the political and cultural avant-garde, became widespread; an orientation against social democracy and representative governance went with it. Radicals on the Right called for imperialist war, those on the Left called for class war, but both wanted revolution. As we know, the Right succeeded, but not without substantial collaboration from and intermixing with the Left. Nowhere was this more apparent than in Fiume.

I. Fiume: la dolce vita, or: the city aflame

"Await me with faith and discipline. I will fail neither you nor destiny."

-a telegram from D'Annunzio to those organizing his arrival in Fiume

In the fall of 1919, egomaniacal soldier-poet Gabriel D'Annunzio led a volunteer rebel army to the disputed city of Fiume. The Italian soldiers stationed there were ordered to stop him, but disobeyed their orders, and welcomed him instead. Desperate, their general drove to meet D'Annunzio before he entered the city, and begged him to turn around. D'Annunzio responded as Napoleon had over a century ago, baring his medal-clad and uniformed chest. "All you have to do is to order the troops to shoot me," he said. Knowing the likely outcome of such an order, the general gave up and accompanied D'Annunzio into the city. They were welcomed by banners, ribbons, laurel leaves, ringing bells and chants of "Long live Italian Fiume! Long live D'Annunzio!" The fascist occupation of Fiume began.

Fiume, located on the coast of the Adriatic Sea, is now known by its Croatian name, Rijeka. Though it is largely Croatian, it has long been a multiethnic community that includes Serbs, Bosniaks, and Italians. In the messy aftermath of WWI, it was torn between Italy and the area that became Yugoslavia; while many Fiuman citizens and Italians wanted the city to belong to Italy, the

United States would not allow that. Burning with resentment against this US dictate, D'Annunzio and his followers saw taking the city as an almost sacred mission, one necessary for the revival of Italian destiny and Fiuman survival. Their occupation of the city lasted for fifteen months. In those months, Fiume became a laboratory for political and social experiments: a unique fusion of anarchist, fascist, socialist, and libertarian politics and ethics existed, with a constitution guaranteeing equality on many bases, unprecedented plans for ensuring social welfare, and an unusually direct democracy. A carnival spirit prevailed, and sexual mores were overturned; dancing and lovemaking went on all night long, and sometimes all day as well. The pastries were reportedly excellent and plentiful until the moment the city ran out of flour, starved by blockade.

This coup was perhaps possible only because of the man who led it, though he failed his mission in the end. Esteemed warrior, poet, and lover, Gabriel D'Annunzio was worshipped by the men and women who surrounded him. He was seen as eccentric, mystic, romantic and seductive, lauded for his heroic deeds in World War I; his appeal to youthful creativity and virility made him compelling, and his ability to use emotion to mobilize armed men was terrifying to the Italian leadership. When he arrived in Fiume, he found its liminal atmosphere much to his liking; and, with the involved consent of its citizenry, made it a paradise... until they ran out of money. D'Annunzio had charisma in inverse proportion to his business sense.

Despite D'Annunzio's importance to the project, the occupation of Fiume was a collaborative effort taken up whole-heartedly by city-dwellers and arriving soldiers alike. The occupying soldiers, who felt discarded by society after their return from WWI, yearned to be useful again, free and esteemed; the organizers of the occupation conspiracy strategically called upon that impulse. The Fiuman occupation became larger than itself: a rebellion against corruption and government, a people's mission, and a celebration of the finer things of life.

The feats of this glorious city read as a jarring contrast to our moralistic narratives when one reads them knowing that D'Annunzio was not only a bit of a fraud but very much a fascist. Admiration of his lively spirit would motivate thousands of Italians to actively participate in fascism in a way that more quotidian people and efforts never could. Fiume became a symbol for Italian national pride, and its hero-citizens were lauded as examples of the true Italian spirit rising up from decades of corrupt government suppression towards a glorious – fascist – future. The collaboration of many

anarchists and socialists in the city served to strengthen its success as a fascist enterprise—but also to make it genuinely interesting as an experiment in different ways of living. As many Italian anarchists moved towards fascism, the city became a microcosm of their interactions and complicities, shocking from the hindsight of their eventual deadly conflict.

political organization and city life

A month into the occupation of the city, Captain Giuseppe Giulietti hijacked a ship full of arms meant for the Russian White Army and diverted it to Fiume. Giuletti was a socialist, and a friend of the noted Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta. His hijacking communicated solidarity on three levels: with the Bolshevik army, against whom the munitions would have been used; with Italian maritime workers, at the time involved in a labor struggle with the government; and, most significantly for us, with the Fiume occupation. D'Annunzio, a man always most moved by bold and poetic deeds, took note:

> ...the commandante observed that the arrival of the *Persia* in Fiume "confirmed not only the sanctity but the universality of our cause... The cause of Fiume is not the cause of the soil, it is the cause of the spirit, the cause of immortality... From the indomitable Sinn Fein of Ireland to the red flag which in Egypt unites the half moon and the cross, all the insurrections of the spirit against the devourers of the raw flesh... are ready to become reignited from those sparks of ours which fly far away...

This is an interesting departure from typical fascist rhetoric, which tends to focus wholly on the national character of its "native people" and to proclaim their inherent connection with the land they inhabit. It marks the beginning of D'Annunzio's attempt to universalize the spirit of the Fiume occupation into one of international resistance to power, and his collaboration with the radical Left. In coming months, D'Annunzio would proclaim the start of a (doomed) League of Fiume, ostensibly an alliance of the oppressed peoples of the earth against the League of Nations, which he described as "that conspiracy of privileged thieves and robbers." He saw himself as the leader of the oppressed, fighting in resistance to the American imperialism that shifted national boundaries in the treaties that ended WWI.

D'Annunzio gave a fascinating speech, "Italy and Life", after the arrival of the *Persia*:

> All the rebels of the earth will be gathered under our sign. And the feeble will be armed. And force will be used against force. And the new crusade of all poor and impoverished nations, the new crusade of all poor and free men against the usurping of nations, the accumulators of all wealth, against the races of prey and against the caste of usurers who yesterday exploited war in order to exploit peace. ...Therefore, our cause is the greatest and the most beautiful which today has been directed against the evil of the world. It extends from Ireland to Egypt, from Russia to the United States, from Romania to India. It gathers the white races and the colored peoples, reconciles the gospel with the Koran... Every insurrection is an effort of expression, an effort of creation. It does not matter if it is interrupted in the blood, provided that survivors transmit the instinct... to the future. For all veterans... it is time to rush toward the future.

Although "usurers" is often fascist code for "Jews", he was more likely thinking of capitalists; as I described in the previous section, D'Annunzio and most other Italian fascists were not *particularly* anti-Semitic, although they were still Gentiles operating without critique in the heavily anti-Semitic context of the time. Moreover, D'Annunzio's language of internationalism in this speech is far more familiar from the anarchist publications of the time than anything nearly fascist, with the exception of the final phrase, which portends Futurist and Arditi rhetoric—themselves conflicted movements, as we will see. And, while D'Annunzio's evocation of "the colored peoples" may feel repugnant in light of modern race analysis, it was (is?) unusual for white Europeans of any political affiliation to take note of "the colored peoples" beyond thinking over who might be further colonized or exploited, let alone to call for a united struggle with them. This moment of breakthrough analysis, born out of struggle and the extension of solidarity towards Fiume by the Left, was about as good as it got; the League shortly drowned in a sea of cultural misunderstandings, lack of funding, and political intrigue.

At home, D'Annunzio and Fiuman government became heavily influenced by the participation of an anarcho-syndicalist, Alceste De Ambris, in D'Annunzio's cabinet; he replaced a moderate who had acted as a go-between for D'Annunzio and the Italian administration. This move signaled D'Annunzio's rejection of the Italian government's attempt to moderate and normalize the Fiume occupation, and his increasing interest in Leftist struggle. In partnership with De Ambris, a new and outrageous constitution was drafted: the Carta del Carnaro. It read in part:

> The Republic of the Carnaro is a direct democracy that has productive labor as its base and the largest possible functional and local autonomy as its governing principle. It confirms, therefore, the collective sovereignty of all citizens, without regard to sex, race, language, class, or religion; but it recognizes major rights to the producers and decentralizes the power of the state as much as possible, in order to assure the harmonious blending of the elements that form it.

The notion of such complete formal sovereignty barely existed anywhere. However contradictory, this was an anarchist-inflected document of governance. Its agenda was to be accomplished via the establishment of voting industrial unions called Corporations, each with its own identity, cultural practices, and social welfare systems... something quite close to the anarchist notion of federated groups based on affinity. There were nine formal Corporations proposed, and an informal tenth—its task, along with a structure called the College of Ediles, was to elevate civic life, celebrate labor, and make Fiume a more beautiful and culturally rich city. This Constitution made the Fiuman government one of the first to propose practicing consensus politics between its many politically and ethnically disparate constituents.

However, the occupation ended before this constitution could be enacted. In practice, the city was ruled by D'Annunzio and his cabinet, by a mayor, and by a series of political/social/spiritual groups. The most prominent of these was called YOGA, organized by a popular war hero, a flying ace named Guido Keller; he described his group as "a union of free spirits tending toward perfection", and was heavily influenced by Futurism. Keller, rather a Han Solo figure, was also employed in city government in the piratical "office of the armed coup", designed to embarrass the Italian government while procuring food and supplies for the city. Keller's activities and image served to sustain and co-create the Fiuman self-impression as trickster rebels who lived well and fought hard; aside from their acts of piracy, he and his compatriots dressed eccentrically and cultivated extreme hairstyles. This sort of entertainment was necessary to preserving the myth the city ran on, having little else.

In addition to their ties to Futurists (whom they critiqued heavily for reducing the individuality and originality of art), YOGA was also in touch with German Dadaists, and Bolsheviks in Russia and Hungary; these contacts helped them to push art and politics in Fiume in a more radical direction. YOGA published a journal of the same name and "organized a 'People's Academy' with regular public debates on topics as free-ranging as free love,

abolition of money, destruction of prisons, beautification of the city..." The group proclaimed itself "against the forces of inertia of the past. We are and must be elements of the new world, lined up for a merciless battle against those of the past." These elements were politically heterogenous: "communists and anarchists, Bolsheviks and William Morris-like socialists, bohemians and nihilists, Nietzscheans and Rosenkreutzers, Rousseauist dreamers and Utopian Proudhonists...not a party with a fixed doctrine, but an open meeting ground for all rebellious spirits... They tried to attract people not on the basis of a homeogenous political program, but rather on their principle of diversity and vitalistic spontaneity."

The Brown and Red Lotuses were interesting subdivisions of YOGA. The Brown Lotuses "promoted the idea of an agrarian democracy of small producers. Among them, a race-earth-nature ideology was widely diffused, and they had strong anti-capitalist, anti-industrial, and anti-city feelings" along with a good deal of appropriated Eastern mysticism. The Red Lotuses, on the other hand, were strongly involved in Fiuman city life, organizing festivals and art events; they "utilized the many international connections of the group to promote their ideas of 'Moving. Living. Destroying. Creating.'" They were anti-fascist, but interested in "developing and exalting the meaning of race" in company with their "international conception that promotes the Dionysian race and the race of the spirit by the practical means of Love." As we shall explore later, this combination of white (though whiteness itself was not fully theorized in this time and place) celebration of the connection of race to land, a Nietzschean imaginary, Dionysian release, and resistance politics is still, disturbingly, heavily present within the Left today.

A lot of revolutionary activity was afoot in Fiume even before the occupation, not least among its female residents. To keep one crew of Italian sailors in the city until the occupation was successful, women entertained the sailors all night long, "sealing their ears with the wax of their kisses" while others removed vital parts of the ship's machinery. Later, women "dressed in their finest clothes" and armed with guns and knives filled the street before the occupation, ready for what might come from its failures; they refused orders from the main organizers of the occupation to disband. Other Fiuman women mixed with Italian soldiers on the borders of Fiume, successfully encouraging them to defect and join the struggle with stories of the suffering of the Fiuman people.

When D'Annunzio was debating about whether or not to respond to the city's call for Italian support, a conspirator arranged for his own small daughter to

arrive at D'Annunzio's office with a bouquet of flowers and a ribbon around her neck with "Fiume or death!" written on it. She "delivered an eloquent address, concluding with an impassioned plea: "As you have saved the mother [Venice, in WWI] save also the daughter... Fiume, ready to immolate herself in a heroic holocaust upon the altar of the Motherland, salutes you, oh hero, and hopes always in your immaculate faith." The gesture was precisely calculated to move D'Annunzio's heart, and succeeded where many serious arguments from respected tacticians had not. Later, when Fiumans started to have a hard time feeding themselves because of sanctions, four thousand Fiuman children were sent to Italy. This was done on the premise of simply keeping them fed, but carried the clear agenda of provoking solidarity and support from Italians at home. The government tried to stop the children's crusade, but was shamed by D'Annunzio into allowing it to continue. D'Annunzio's strategic appeal to society to protect the future as embodied in children worked as well as it had upon D'Annunzio himself.

Sexual liberation and hedonistic festivals were more than incidental to Fiume; they were the essential glue for creating and maintaining the atmosphere necessary to sustain the occupation. One observer described 1920 Fiume as "a place where the highest concentration of a specifically bourgeois and intellectual subversiveness could be found and transgression of norms and mass practice of rebellion was an organised everyday occurrence." Women's liberation from marriage and the home, open homosexuality, changes in dress, and a "new aesthetics of communal life" became common in Fiume, along with a "neverending cycle of dances, concerts, banquets, theatre performances, games, torchlit processions". D'Annunzio stopped calling it "the city aflame", and began calling it "the city of life." Keller expounded upon this transition in *Yoga*: "When the redemptive mission of the holocaust succeeded, something was expected of them. Under the ash of their involuntary physical activity, generous sparks kindled their hearts, and... they gradually understood... that life is born from struggle, as harmony is generated from discordant sounds."

Fiume was not all sunshine and flowers and free love; ethnically-based conflict occurred there routinely, including during the occupation. Most notably, a mob destroyed Croatian businesses for nearly 48 hours in July. In the fall of the previous year, the city was gripped by xenophobia, and its newspaper called for the expulsion of foreigners from the city. Specific foreigners whom the press accused of wrongdoings were characterized as Jewish by that press in explicitly racist and stereotyped ways. A handbill was distributed throughout the city describing the League of Nations as "invented

by international Jewish bankers as a mask for their speculations against all the peoples of the world." In response, the president of the Committee of the Italian Jewish Communities wrote D'Annunzio a letter calling his attention to these various instances of anti-Semitism, including the circulation of the old rumor that D'Annunzio was himself a Jew. D'Annunzio and other members of his administration and military denounced the anti-Semitic press, and it largely stopped.

D' Annunzio

D'Annunzio was an embodied representation of the libidinal force many disenchanted Italians found missing from their society, a creative mythologist who drew forth beauty and passion from others. His speeches are described as transcendent experiences in which enormous crowds leaned silently into his unamplified voice. He saw himself, and was seen by others, as the embodied Italian Nietzschean Superman—able to fuck, fight, and write poetry with equal skill. All of the misogynist implications of that position were present as well; in one of his novels, D'Annunzio "described his spiritual ancestors as an ancient and noble race of warriors, and he hailed their acts of savagery in the past: 'their victories, the beautiful women they raped, their drunkenness, their magnificence.'" He believed he was a great warrior poet sent by history to transform the "great unwashed", to elevate essence out of the pit of massification. In this, Fiume and its *la dolce vita*, the mythic city of passion and richness, was made for D'Annunzio, and he for it.

D'Annunzio was also largely responsible for popularizing Nietzschean ideas in Italy. "In the early years of the twentieth century, everybody was reading Nietzsche... It was through D'Annunzio and the various artistic and literary avant-garde circles that his ideas emerged as a trendy topic of conversation in the fashionable salons before becoming part of official academic culture... ...Above all it was D'Annunzio's picture of Nietzsche, that is: Nietzsche filtered through the provincially decadent and morbidly sensual aestheticism of the Italian poet, that was destined to have more success and diffusion in Italy than the original, mainly because it was more profound and therefore easier to understand." This was D'Annunzio's most important role relative to the growth of fascism, whether in relation to Fiume or to Nietzsche: when ideas or situations passed through him, he refracted their light in a way that made them romantic and inspiring to others.

D'Annunzio saw the anticipated passing of the ruling classes as an opportunity for a meritocracy of heroes and geniuses. His revolt against the Italian

government was motivated by his artistic disdain for modern bourgeois mass society and its tendency to stifle creativity.[c] This is the prettier side of the fascist drive—a rebellion against the established and corrupt order in favor of the cultural and artistic supremacy of genius. Unfortunately, this critique also demonstrates a disdain for "average" people; in a meritocracy, someone is still on the bottom. Many individualist Italian anarchists of the time would follow a similar line of reasoning into fascism.

Rhetoric and theater were intrinsic to D'Annunzio's success. In his first speech upon entering the city, he announced: "In this mad and cowardly world, Fiume today is the symbol for liberty. In the mad and cowardly world there is a single element: Fiume. There is a single truth: and this is Fiume. There is a single love: and this is Fiume! Fiume is like a blazing searchlight that radiates in the midst of an ocean of abjection." In this moment, he initiated the powerful imagery that resonated with Italians so strongly that his illicit expedition could not be stopped for more than a year: a city ablaze with a passion that would destroy all that was rotten and ruined about the West, something that would "transform [the West] into something finer and holier." His call was too powerful, in fact: within a month or two of his arrival, he had to issue an appeal for Italian troops to stop defecting to Fiume, as he could not feed them all. Ledeen says about the speech: "...politics had become something greater, something transcendental. In his dialogue with the crowd, D'Annunzio manipulated the mass of his listeners into a single personality, which spoke to him with a single voice. When he asked for its act of faith, it spoke to him with a single *si*, and he expected this unanimity." This is a central irony of D'Annunzio, and elitist fascism generally: those against "massification" often produce masses. When not everyone sees themselves as heroes, self-proclaimed Supermen attract crowds.

When the Italian government eventually offered a fairly palatable deal to end the occupation, the Fiuman council approved it. Many Fiumans were displeased by this news, and an angry mob gathered outside the government building. D'Annunzio took the issue to the people, a strategy few other politicians were using at the time. Standing at his balcony, "[p]aragraph by paragraph, he read the government's proposal to the crowd, and he asked them 'Do you want this or not?' Mixed cries reached his ears, and at the end of the recitation, the crowd demanded the rejection of the proposal and renewed resistance by their leaders. 'But resistance means suffering. Is that what you desire?' His own wishes became evident when he unfolded the banner…

c Ledeen speculates that this was partially fueled by D'Annunzio's embarrassment over his own tendency to collect extravagant material luxuries.

and invited the Arditi to sing their war songs. With this new act of defiance, D'Annunzio promised the crowd that he would submit the question... and the populace burst into a new celebration that lasted late into the night." He had successfully manufactured a consensus against the deal, and there was little forces inside or out could do in response.

Better erotic theater than this can hardly be imagined; D'Annunzio called his adventure in Fiume "the loveliest of the lovelies", and the city responded sensually to his regard. But not everyone regarded D'Annunzio with worshipful love; many other powerful men of his period distrusted him deeply. Mussolini wrote often about his worries about D'Annunzio's power to inspire love in men. Marinetti described him as "a wonderful sorcerer, deep down a cynic, full of pederastic vanity; infantile, but with a terribly forceful will and ambition"; elsewhere, he wrote that D'Annunzio "has remained the aesthete, a maniac of beautiful gestures, a prisoner to beautiful phrases and to men of mediocre status who flatter him and foster his mania." Much the same could be said about Marinetti; some of this must be sour grapes, as D'Annunzio didn't care for him much. The kind of homophobia these men felt towards D'Annunzio is one common among fascists, a homophobia grown in the cracks of their attempt to build a society of intense love and camaraderie between men, and the libidinal nature of those relationships. They found his decadence and poetic extravagance both desirable and concerning.

D'Annunzio's success lay in his ability to combine art, culture, hedonism, and politics into something people loved and were willing to die for, something that transcended all its elements and became nearly religious. He was aware of the spiritual implications of what he was doing, and embraced them. He saw Fiume as a kind of "superworld", and the forces that opposed them the "underworld"; he coined a new term for the prime minister of Italy, one that means something like "shit", something low and inhuman. He was accused of promoting "Orpheus over Christ" by the church in his embrace of hedonism; he also adopted Christian imagery for his own purposes. Fiuman festivals were a kind of civic liturgy, more or less explicitly. During one, St. Sebastian's Day, D'Annunzio was presented with a bayonet in recollection of St. Sebastian's wounds, uniting the two men in the public imagination. Ledeen analyzes this blending of the sacred and profane as necessary for the blending of right and left in Fiume: it was the force that compelled the people who lived there towards unity in new heights of struggle. The inspiration that once drove people to die for Christianity now drove them to live and fight for fascism.

D'Annunzio wanted the Fiuman adventure to both liberate Fiume and purify the Italian people. Later, his desires extended to the liberation and elevation of all oppressed peoples. While he failed at ultimately liberating the city, forced to retreat in shame after a five-day shelling of the city in 1920 known as "Bloody Christmas", his efforts inspired those who were also intent on the purification of the Italian people. Fascism drew great spiritual inspiration and strength from Fiume, the Arditi who occupied it, and from D'Annunzio himself. It was both the prelude to Mussolini's fascist regime in Italy, and one of its necessary sparks. It is a painful coincidence that, decades before the Shoah, Fiume was widely called "the City of the Holocaust", following from D'Annunzio's imagery—the fire that inspires can also be wildly destructive.

Mussolini, despite his distrust of D'Annunzio and distaste for his lifestyle and affect, was not above using D'Annunzio to gain power. Reluctant to aid D'Annunzio materially until he demanded it, he was less shy about "hitching on to the blazing D'Annunzian star", cynically using his newspaper to signal support for Fiume and thereby gain credibility and supporters from the reflected shine. This is typical of Mussolini, who routinely used the feats and sincerity of others in his climb to the top; once there, he discarded, silenced, or at best used those who had assisted him. This man, the formal inventor of fascism, was once an anarchist, or close to it... and he stabbed a lot of former comrades in the back during the process of his transition.

II. Mussolini, some anarchists, and their turn towards fascism

> ...An ideology may generate forces, and... these forces are chosen, little by little in the silence, in the darkness of tyranny, in the fervor of a passion for justice sufficient enough to breathe life into them. But a programme never takes shape in a crematory furnace.
>
> —Armando Borghi

Benito Mussolini was born into a rich family history of socialist and anarchist struggle in the region of Romagna. When his father died, "a thousand comrades of the party followed his coffin." He crossed to Switzerland when he was 20, apparently to avoid military service—an act compatible with his socialist politics at the time, but something he later needed to cover up as militarism became crucial to fascism. While he was in Switzerland, he was expelled from two cantons for labor agitation. Around this time, the authorities began describing him as an anarchist, though he seems to have still identified as a socialist. He began reading Stirner, Schopenhaur, and Nietzsche —a combination common among many anarchists who went on

to become fascists. Upon returning to Italy, he translated two of the works of the foundational anarchist thinker Peter Kropotkin, and began writing in support of anarchist attacks. After doing a short prison term for opposing the Tripolitan War, he attended a socialist congress at which he was given authority over the important Socialist daily *L'Avanti* and thus became the "leading star" of the party.

From this position, Mussolini was able to capitalize upon the uprising known as "Red Week" to strengthen his own power. An anarchist soldier, Augusto Masetti, shot his general in protest of the Tripolitan War, and was shut up in an insane asylum. He immediately became a cause celébrè for all war resisters, and at an ensuing protest on his behalf, the police shot and killed two republicans and an anarchist. A general strike and week of rioting spread throughout of Italy, involving many thousands of angry participants. Mussolini, ever the opportunist, claimed his writing in *L'Avanti* inspired Red Week, which was actually a decentralized movement that took advice from few leaders. It seems that Mussolini barely participated in the uprising at all, beyond writing from the safety of his newspaper office. Borghi snidely remarks: "It is well to remember that in the radical quarters of Milan Mussolini had the reputation of a braggart and a coward."

As momentum built towards Italian participation in WWI, Mussolini wrote in *L'Avanti* against intervention and militarism in general, in accordance with the views of the general Left. A few on the Left began to argue for intervention, most notably Massimo Rocca, who wrote under the pseudonym of Libero Tancredi. He argued that participation in the war would train the proletariat for the eventual revolutionary war; that the war was just; and that war was a hygienic force that cleansed the world of old impurities. Mussolini engaged in fierce, conflictual dialogue with Tancredi and others, before suddenly switching sides and arguing for the war; this happened exactly as he broke with *L'Avanti* and the Socialist Party and began his own paper, *Il Popolo D'Italia.* Critics see this as another moment of opportunism; Mussolini had gotten all he could out of the Socialists, and it was to his political advantage to switch sides. (Some say he was even directly bought by the Italian government.) This betrayal came to completion a few years later, when his blackshirt thugs trashed the offices of *L'Avanti* to terrorize the Left into submission. Despite his sudden interventionism, Mussolini himself barely participated in the war, leaving the military after incurring a small wound in training. As his fascist troops were soon largely composed of disenfranchised Arditi (the elite troops of the war), and the Futurist aesthetic prized warfare as a cleansing, virile experience, he later went to great pains to hide this.

But Mussolini was still not yet himself fully a fascist, as we can see in an episode concerning time. When the state began to impose daylight-savings time, many Italians refused to abide by it. The refusal to acknowledge time and its regulation was and is an important element of resistance to capitalism; many anarchists and indigenous revolutionaries have written about the necessity of destroying the social construct of time, and Benjamin reminds us of how the French revolutionaries of 1830 fired at the clocks to stop the day. Daylight-savings time was seen as an attempt by bosses to impose enforced productivity through globalizing and regularizing time upon the workers. Mussolini shared this analysis. He wrote: "The question of "legal time", which on the rebound has brought with it that of illegal time (which after all is the only legal one, according to the laws that regulate the universe as discovered by astronomers) is a serious affair, much more serious than those who jeer at it think. For myself I say... that we are face to face with the first great revolution of the Italian people against those who govern them." Mussolini still, plainly, counted himself part of the rebellion against the government and its mechanisms of oppression. Fascist states later attempted to become relentlessly efficient, modern machines that used techniques like time to strip people of their humanity and enforce obedience—but Mussolini had not yet begun to consider this mentality desirable. His essay concludes:

> The State is a terrifying machine that swallows living men and throws them up dead, like numbers. Human life has nothing secret or intimate left to it, either in the spiritual or material domain. The smallest corners are explored, the slightest movement tabulated. Each person is pigeon-holed and numbered as in a slave galley. Here is the great curse which has oppressed the human race since far off days, when they felt their way gropingly: to have created through the centuries "the State", only to succumb under its weight. If the revolt against legal time were a supreme effort of revolt against the coercion of the State, a ray of light would then filter into our despairing individualist souls. But probably there will not be such a way out. We too are vowed to sacrifice. So much the worse...
>
> There remains to us, the last survivors of Individualism, in order to go through the present night and that of tomorrow, the religion of Anarchy alone—an anachronistic religion for our day, but how consoling!

This is anarchist rhetoric at its finest. Rhetoric notwithstanding, Mussolini shortly made his turn towards brutal, regulatory statism of the sort he just described. Armando Borghi paints a bloody picture of the early consequences

of this turn:

> There are people who pretend that the Fascist crimes appeared only after the March on Rome, or after the affair of Matteotti. Among those people are several categories: the unthinking; the superficial; the accomplices of the first days, bent on hiding their own faults; those liberals, entrusted with watching, who slept and woke up too late under the lash of the whip; those whom the imperial sewer vomited up because of a surfeit of blood. ...let us not forget that the Fascist reign of terror developed long before the murder of Matteotti.
>
> They killed in the streets, the hospitals, the public schools, the prisons, the churches, the houses. They obstructed those who make a profession of relieving human misery—nurses, lawyers, doctors, firemen—from going to the relief of victims. They punished fathers for their sons, or entire families... Arms in hand they got people out of their beds. They killed under the very eyes of mother and children...
>
> The most favored among [the victims] escaped with floggings, with affronts and humiliations, which graded from teeth-pulling to the castor-oil purge, including the shaving off of the beard. But there were also others who were mutilated, blinded, thrown out of the window, or again immersed into water up to the neck. There were those whom they put naked into the most frequented streets of the city and exhibited to the public. They reserved that fate usually for dignified, cultivated people, who had held public offices. Many became insane after undergoing such outrages and humiliations.
>
> Mussolini continued to fling his cry: "strike everywhere, spare no one!" In that way he arrived at Rome.

Mussolini was backed in all of this by the Church, the rich, and the state — an alliance common to the rise of fascism in many situations. This was not a merely ideological form of support, but a very material one:

> As 1921 progressed, Mussolini's squads became more openly violent, intimidating socialists, communists and anarchists and continuing to attack their institutions, burning buildings and destroying printing presses. This was seen as acceptable by the state and the bourgeoisie to keep the 'Reds' in hand; the industrial class saw fascism as effective against union militancy; and the landowners saw it as a way to suppress the peasants agitating for land reform. The activities of the squads

were very rarely punished by the police, military government or the courts. Sympathetic members of the military trained or armed them, and the police supplied vehicles for the roving squads to attack political opponents.

The Left came out to fight regardless; their main failing was in forgetting their own revolutionary goals, in being too reasonable. Gilles Dauvé offers this analysis:

> The scenario varied little. A localised fascist onslaught would be met by a working-class counter-attack, which would then relent (following calls for moderation from the reformist workers' movement) as soon as revolutionary pressure tapered off; the proletarians trusted the democrats to dismantle the armed bands of fascists. The fascist threat would then pull back, regroup and go elsewhere, over time making itself credible to the same state from which the masses were expecting a solution. The proletarians were quicker to realize the enemy in the black shirt of the street thug than in the "normal" uniform of a cop or a soldier, draped in a legality sanctioned by habit, law and universal suffrage.

When, in October 1922, Mussolini arrived in Rome with a huge crowd of supporters, the king knew it was within his best interests to accede to Mussolini's demands to be made part of the government—but this was not only because the consequences might have otherwise proved dire for the king himself. Rather, the king knew Mussolini to be his ally against the Left, and gathered him close before the Left remembered their revolutionary goals.

On a personal level, Borghi portrays Mussolini as a man dominated by resentment and petty anger, and cites various examples of his explosive bad behavior. These range from betraying his friends, to locking his exes up in mental institutions, to feeling unreasonably hurt by people's reactions to his own decisions. This kind of resentment, Reich's *character armor*, is a common current amongst fascists; I believe it is fundamental to their enterprise.

Mussolini's feelings, his ability to climb to power through a series of alliances and later betrayals, and his philosophical leanings when he was an anarchist all seem important to me in understanding his turn. The support he received from others, whether such support was intentional or not, was also vital. D'Annunzio and Marinetti, Rygier and Arpinati, De Ambris and the unnamed residents of Fiume—all were complicit in his rise to power, and paid dearly for it later. Nietzsche and Stirner, Sorel and Schopenhaur—these are the

names of philosophers revered by anarchists who turned fascist... as well as many who did not. They were not fascists themselves, I will argue—but their lines of thought were suitable for fascist appropriation.

While he is one of the least sympathetic examples of this trajectory, Mussolini is a clear example of how just critique of society can become reactionary violence, of how resisting power can create new, terrible power. His movement against the state crystallized into a more oppressive and brutal state than before. His interest in saving Italy, in creating a new fascist man who was powerful and respected, in fighting what he saw as modern decadence and failure, is most clearly indicted by how it turned out—but also by its foundation in resentment and a sense of inferiority. It seems to me that these beginnings will always lead to horrifying ends.

anarchists who turned

Looking briefly at the trajectories and lives of other anarchists (or close) turned fascist (or something like it) and finding their commonalities will help us to understand the roots and complications of this tendency. In his book *The Anarchist-Individualist Origins of Italian Fascism*, Stephen Whittaker reviews the interrelated lives of several of these: Leandro Arpinati, Torquato Nanni, Massimo Rocca, and Maria Rygier.

Leandro Arpinati was "a fascist of the first hour"; an anarcho-individualist from Emilia-Romagna, birthplace of Mussolini, with its rich history of socialist and anarchist struggle. Whittaker credits him with "fus[ing] elements of Rocca, Rygier, and Nanni's thinking with his own experiences in his native Romagna to carry currents of anarcho-individualism into the fascist movement, and to the higher levels of power." His father was a socialist, and Arpinati rebelled against both his father and his politics when he became an anarcho-individualist. He made his turn towards fascism out of friendship with Mussolini and reading Rocca, and began providing private security for Mussolini at speaking events. In 1920, he deliberately provoked a confrontation between socialists and fascists in Bologna, and used the death of a fascist at that event to justify the violent campaigns of fascist terror that preceded the March on Rome. He generated a culture of grassroots fascist violence, violence as an ends as well as a means. In this way, he organized the fascist takeover of Bologna, and a huge rise in fascist membership. In 1924, he oversaw fascist intimidation around the election, insuring the fascist electoral victory that formalized the dictatorship. Later, he was responsible for actually *normalizing* fascism, transforming it from daily

intensive terrorist violence into something more sustainable; for example, he did a lot to advance the cause of fascist sports, giving people a way to exercise "revolutionary virility" without destabilizing bloodshed. Arpinati sought to actualize the dream of fascism: a state in which the wishes of the individual were something synonymous with the wishes of the nation. For Arpinati, an idealist, this meant that fascist administration had to be perfectly ethical. He was eventually imprisoned for ten years over his opposition to the Italian alliance with Nazi Germany, as well as his efforts around these principles of perfect accordance; true believers are seldom rewarded by the fruits of their labor. Shortly after his release, granted because he asked to join the war effort, he joined Nanni in Santa Sofia.

Torquato Nanni was a socialist leader who served as the mayor of Santa Sofia, but had fascist friends and sympathies. He was still routinely harassed and attacked by fascists, including people who worked for Arpinati, despite their history of friendship; these fascists and their attacks were funded and supported by the area's landowners, who feared and despised the socialist project. Despite his own harassment, Nanni wrote in defense of fascist violence; Arpinati had to intervene to save him from it several times. Nanni was permanently torn between his love of the Romagnan *comune* (small villages that operated collectively and semi-independently of the national government), his Leftist principles, and his desire to follow Mussolini. This inner conflict proved actually fatal. At the end of WWII, Nanni and Arpinati found themselves living together and sharing an awkward double-loyalties position—making nice with the Nazi soldiers occupying their area, but using their fascist credentials to protect local villagers from harm while secretly spiriting British troops to safety at night. Despite these efforts, several days after the war ended the two were shot by socialist partisans and their bodies thrown in a ditch for their crimes and collaborations with fascists.

Massimo Rocca (Tancredi)[d] was an anarcho-individualist whose writings exerted great influence on Arpinati, whose pro-intervention challenges to Mussolini forced Mussolini to come out in favor of WWI, and whose friendship helped Maria Rygier shift towards fascism. One of the first anarchists to begin arguing for military intervention in WWI, he relied upon the works of Stirner, Nietzsche, and Sorel to advance a hybrid idea of what an individualist society ought to look like and how to achieve it. He was deeply influenced by his brief exile to the US; being mistreated as an immigrant

d While Rocca founded a journal called *Il Novatore* and his followers were called *novatoriani*, he should not be confused with the Futurist anti-fascist anarchist who went by Renzo Novatore. The word means "innovator."

there embittered him and turned him towards Italian nationalism. He was one of the primary advocates of nationalist Social Darwinism, introducing an element of ethnic racism into Italian fascism; he saw Italian nationalism not as an end to itself, but as a gathering place for his society of strong individuals. He later suggested the formation of "Competence Groups" as a way to recruit the elite into fascism, in pursuit of his individualist ideals. He was eventually forced into exile in 1926 over his disagreement with certain elements with fascism.

Though born into wealth and privilege, Maria Rygier quickly joined the socialist movement, and became an anarchist around 1906. She fought against militarism at first, and did several prison terms for acts of rebellion on various fronts—women's rights, opposing the church, class struggle, supporting the assassin of King Umberto, and participating in the Red Week revolt. At first seen as a hero for her valor "despite" her gender, she was later disempowered by sexist attacks from various anarchist men, though her fame persisted long enough for her to receive equal billing with Malatesta at several anarchist conferences. While she was initially a strong supporter of the previously described war dissenter Augusto Masetti, her anger towards the inaction of many Leftists and her friendship with Rocca (one of the few to show her solidarity during this fall from grace) moved her first towards individualism, then towards interventionism—and, finally, fascism. However, she was eventually exiled from fascist Italy for her sympathies with Freemasonry, which she refused to renounce.

We can pick out several instructive common factors in these stories.

the emotional drift of history.
At the start of these events, power was up in the air: while provisionally held by the government, it was actually held by the people, and anarchists and fascists fought for their affections. Because fascists were more willing to use charisma, brutality, and backstabbing, they won the game—but this was not predetermined; anarchists had a longer history in Italy, and many sympathetic fellow travelers. From the most cynical perspective, one could see the political drift of these five individuals (to include Mussolini) as one that simply follows the social current. It is small comfort that none of them held on to it for long.

These people and their agendas were themselves formed by the same social history and social conditions they sought to harness. The forces that brought fascism to power are the same that fueled anarchism—disillusionment with

the state, a history of local autonomy, outrage against global powers, veterans who felt betrayed, and so on. As always, the forces of history are both larger and more atomically particular than the names they most prominently record.

charisma, mythos, and theory.
Those who won in Italy were willing to deploy these forces of manipulation; anarchists were not so willing, or, otherwise, were unable to. These elements also worked to shift individuals from one camp to the other; it seems that Mussolini's power of attraction worked upon Arpinati, Rocca's upon Rygier, and so on. D'Annunzio's Fiume is a most powerful example of how transformative these forces can be; had the forces of anarchy become dominant in the Fiuman lore, perhaps the occupation would have become a larger source of strength for anarchists than for fascists. (Indeed, some recent anarchist publications still cite Fiume as an anarchistic event.) It seems as though Italian anarchists during this period did not easily recognize these forms of power, and were therefore both personally vulnerable to them and ill prepared to combat them in the public arena.

Stirner and Nietzsche, who "arrived together" in Italy, were important mythic and theoretical reference points for fascists and anarchists alike. Their ideas of the union of egos and the Superman were extremely popular with many anarchists who later turned fascist; they bestowed a sense of ethical impunity and denied the necessity of listening to their dissenting comrades. Many anarchists who read these philosophers were/are certainly not fascists, but their work was of serious inspiration to nearly all of those who turned. It is interesting to contrast political evolution from these nihilist thinkers with the political development of those Russian nihilists, discussed later, who always cared more for the soviet.

bad experiences with their comrades; becoming bitter and resentful.
Rocca and Arpinati were exiled (and to some degree, self-exiled) from anarchist circles over their individualism and militarism; the same was true of Mussolini, in relation to socialist circles, and Rygier suffered from sexist violence on all fronts. Nanni alone is, seemingly, free from this aspect, sticking loyally beside the fascists who treated him badly while continuing to call himself a socialist. Excepting him, all of these people seem to have built new homes of resentment and criticism generated from the political and social structures that they once inhabited. This mentality seems to have led to re-enacting the harm they had suffered. The Italian state commonly used phrenology to mark anarchists as terrorists and put them in insane asylums; in this way, scapegoating them for the social ills they opposed, "anarchists

became the criminal and the crime at the same time." It was therefore no innovation for Arpinati, former anarchist, to do the same to his former comrades.

Rocca's social Darwinism is linked to the same biological and cultural essentialist views; in his individualist-anarchist days, Rocca used his politics to bully. "[Rocca] would convince anarchist colleagues to pay for his meals in the local *trattoria* by railing against them during the meal with snippets of his Stirner-Nietzschean logic such as 'you pay for my meal because you're weak. I, on the other hand, am strong.'" Rocca would later write, "That which many anarchists and subversives cannot or do not want to understand is that the force behind an authority or an exploitation does not depend either on the guilt or the will of the one who does it, but on the resignation of those exploited and those who let it happen to them." This is victim-blaming logic that justifies further victimizations, a major emotional component of fascist ideology. Rocca described humiliation as a failure of courage, as the location in which morality sets in ... but for him it was the place in which resentment and abusive tendencies took hold, the very sort of behavior Nietzsche would have abhorred. Borghi described Mussolini's character in similar ways.

threads of friendship between them
Rocca wrote:

> They whose hearts beat one day for national revolt might today beat for another, different revolt; since they appreciate and love one another, even when they struggle in opposing camps, for the reason that only those who have faith appreciate faith in others... These people have always accepted and boasted about being responsible for their own actions, in which their conscience was enough to support them; and, their situation has always been tragic, morally and materially, representing the ineluctable clash between collective resistance and individual fate.

This solidarity and friendship, the highest value among comrades, also served as a bond that dragged not only these people, but many more, down the path of collaboration with fascism. While Arpinati and Nanni no doubt deserved their deaths, there is something tragic in their relationship.

None of this is meant to excuse or explain away the choices these people made to participate in the fascist political project. While it may not have been as clear as it is now, they are all responsible for the warning signs they ignored and the decisions they made. Once fascists began killing in the street,

it ought to have been clear enough; but the language of violence, misogyny, domination, and national identity should have made them aware of what they were doing before then. Most Italian anarchists—thousands of them—did not become fascists; many of those, and many more politically unaffiliated people, fought bravely in resistance to fascism, risking and often losing their lives in their dissent. We will never know most of their names, but these people, who fought for freedom and for their lives, are the heroes that bring these collaborators to shame.[e] However...

no heroes

In my account of Mussolini's life, I relied heavily on Armando Borghi's book *Mussolini: Red And Black*, written in the early years of Italian fascism. Borghi is far from an unbiased observer, but is a particularly useful primary source—he knew Mussolini when they were both young anarchists. Borghi resented Mussolini's attempt to pretend friendliness with Errico Malatesta, whom Borghi followed. He published his book in a rushed attempt to tell the world of the Duce's early Leftism, lest people be misled by Mussolini's redactionist history; it drips with the venom of the personally betrayed as well as the righteous anger of the anti-fascist.

As I investigated Borghi's life, I was impressed by its general outline. He became friends with Malatesta at age 17, and followed him through many adventures and prison terms. During this pre-fascist period under discussion, he held a firm middle line between individualist and communist tendencies within anarchism, and stayed dedicated to the working class. He was arrested many times for anti-militarist activity, and became the editor of the anarchist weekly paper *L'Aurora*; when he celebrated the assassination of the Italian king in its pages, he was imprisoned yet again. He took up labor agitation for a time, but also celebrated Masetti's act of war resistance in a paper he co-wrote with Maria Rygier; he escaped repression for this by fleeing to Paris, though she was not so lucky and did yet another prison term. He stayed abroad until Italy offered him amnesty in 1912; when he returned, he participated in Red Week. He was interned because of his anti-war work from 1915 through 1918, and continued to agitate for class war through various publications upon his release.

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e See *Militant Anti-Fascism* by M. Testa for more.

In 1920, he visited Lenin, and they had this rather remarkable exchange:

> Lenin asked him if he were opposed to centralism and Borghi replied: "You have that right. How could any anarchist be in favour of centralism?" To which Lenin retorted: "Freedom ought not to be the death of the revolution." Borghi countered with: "In the absence of freedom, the revolution would be a horror." Their conversation proceeded quietly.

Borghi was arrested in October of 1920 along with several other prominent anarchists on "no particular charges", and released a few months later. He attempted to fight the rise of fascism by promoting the Labor Alliance group, while he and his wife received continual death threats, but by 1923 they were compelled to leave the country. Borghi's exploits continued in France, the United States, and, eventually, Italy once again. I was tempted to consider Borghi a hero of anti-fascist Italy, until that impression was fractured by reading this:

"Borghi, jilted by Rygier after a brief romance, led... attacks, most of which were not directed at Rygier's ideas or intelligence, but at her femininity, her style of dress, and, later, her person." Whitaker refers in the last to a horrifying episode in which Borghi and other men forcibly took Rygier to a gynecologist to determine what was "wrong" with her mental and emotional condition—that is, why she was a defiant and therefore emasculating woman. "Using as an excuse for the exam their concerns about her lungs, she underwent a forced gynecological exam after which she was publically declared "female but impenetrable by any man", the association between her anatomical 'deformity' and her mental state deemed evident by Lombrosian standards." Whittaker adds that one might have expected Borghi to show more empathy around issues of humiliation and abuse, given his own physically harmful and degrading experiences with the police. Rygier would later endure more forced gynecological exams while imprisoned by fascist doctors, who claimed to be investigating the sources of her "hysterical character."

To resist making heroes of our dead is a primary lesson for antifascists in this history. Another is the actual value of *ad hominem* assessments of people—personal practices affect political ones, because in truth there is no separation. Mussolini abused, neglected, and locked up several of his partners, and so it is no surprise that he abused, neglected, incarcerated, tortured, and murdered many others with whom he previously had affinity as a means to gaining more power. Too, personal actions have political consequences. Maria Rygier was an independent and strong-willed person, and her movement towards

fascism was her own—but also, how much easier was that drift when anarchist men had treated her so terribly? Had she found solidarity and understanding amongst anarchists instead of sexual violence, perhaps she would have been less likely to make the transition. Many women and femmes, before and since, can speak to how brutal and disillusioning misogynist attacks are when they come from one's alleged comrades.

This devastating misogyny was also present in another arena in which Italian anarchists and fascists sometimes shared community: Futurism.

III. Futurism: "war is the sole hygiene of the world"

> So let them come, the gay incendiaries with charred fingers! ...Come on! Set fire to the library shelves! ...Take up your pickaxes, your axes and hammers, and wreck, wreck the venerable cities, pitilessly! Injustice, strong and sane, will break out radiantly in their eyes. Art, in fact, can be nothing but violence, cruelty, and injustice.
>
> —F.T. Marinetti, "Manifesto of Futurism"

On the 15th of February in 1910, a Futurist theatre performance took place in Italy; around three thousand people were present. Upon perceiving that the performance had political elements, particularly an anti-Austrian sentiment (Austria governed parts of Italy shortly before this), various officials attempted to intervene, but were ignored. Chaos followed:

> Fights broke out between students and anarchists, futurists and austriophiles, socialists and syndicalists... While the curtain came down, Zimolo and Marinetti continued their shouts of "Down with Austria! Long live Italy!" Both were arrested and led out of the theater. Some of their adversaries lay in wait at the exit. Insults and threats were flung at them and returned with equal gusto. An anarchist took Marinetti by the throat, Carrieri received a kick to the groin. Philo-futurists threw themselves onto the passéists, and a wild scuffle broke out. The police hardly managed to escort the arrested artists to the cab. A cortége of people followed them to the police station.

A year later when the police prohibited an appearance by Marinetti in Parma, fearing another such uproar, there was a massive riot. The workers of the city invited Marinetti to speak at their hall anyway, and he gave a lecture to two thousand people called "The Necessity and Beauty of Violence." According to Berghaus, "[t]he workers who attended the talk objected to Marinetti's

long-winded rhetoric of patriotism and his bellicose call for a bloodbath, but they nevertheless listened with interest and in silence, even when they disagreed with the pronouncements. An applause ended the evening, which provided great intellectual satisfaction.'"

Futurism was an art movement, one of writing, theatre, and visual art. It was also an aesthetic; it was also a political tendency. Anarchists, fascists, and socialists all took part in it. Its creator, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, at one time aspired to be the chief artist of the fascist regime, but was often regarded with suspicion and placed under surveillance by the fascist authorities. The movement's most interesting alliance was with the Arditi, the elite troops of WWI, whom the Futurists admired; many Arditi became Futurists themselves, some anti-fascist and some fascist. Its aesthetic was one of intense modernism, though complemented by *eternal return*, the past reinventing itself in the present; it relied heavily on notions of speed and virility, not to mention misogyny. Marinetti's "Manifesto of Futurism" is indicative:

> We intend to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and fearlessness... We say that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty; the beauty of speed... Except in struggle, there is no more beauty. No work without an aggressive characteristic can be a masterpiece... We will glorify war—the world's only hygiene—militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for women. We will destroy the museums, libraries, academies of every kind, we will fight moralism, feminism, every opportunistic or utilitarian cowardice...
>
> When the future is barred to them, the admirable past may be a solace for the ills of the moribund, the sickly, the prisoner... But we want no part of it, the past, we the young and strong *Futurists*!

This theoretical backdrop is quite different from the Volkische ideology explored in a previous section. While still essentialist in its misogyny, Futurism's disdain for the past seems to decline the paleogenic thinking that fueled the Nazis... though Mussolini seems to have desired the return of the Roman Empire. Futurism prefigures the techno-futurism and transhumanism we see within some elitist crypto-fascist projects today, such as Tim Draper's "Six Californias" movement, designed to segregate the rich and poor (and white and non-white) parts of California. It is an unabashed macro-formulation of the micro-battles taking place in San Francisco over the tech industry's

gentrifying effect on the area. Perhaps this difference in fascist theory is simply a matter of class; the artists and bohemians who then found a home within Futurism are now employed in Silicon Valley.

Marinetti came out of the Paris art scene, and, in his early years, pursued literature and theatre. He admired D'Annunzio's plays very much, and defended them against negative reception. He also acquired a great love for Wagner, the proto-fascist composer, whom he saw as an "anti-traditionalist and revolutionary." During this time, he was exposed to anarchist and socialist ideas, and also began celebrating the "Dionysian vitality of Nietzsche's *Ubermensch*" in his own work. He wrote of speed, destruction, change, and his desire for newness; he became so representative of this tendency that he was frequently referred to as the "caffeine of Europe."

Marinetti was influenced not only by Nietzsche, but (less predictably) by John Stuart Mill, whose work encouraged Marinetti to support societies of free individuals, though he read Mill in rather a different manner than is traditional. George Sorel's ideas of revolutionary violence via the general strike also spoke to Marinetti, who, as so many others along this trajectory did, divorced Sorel's arguments from their class basis until they became a general call for violence, assumed to be revolutionary in and of itself. More generally, Marinetti read anarchist authors and participated in anarchist milieus into the 1910s; anarchism was a fundamental part of the culture that surrounded him.

This meant that many anarchists took him and his ideas seriously. The opening vignette is only one example of Marinetti's multitudinous interactions with anarchists, socialists, and workers leaning to the left. When he performed the same speech on a different date, his lecture was interrupted by "assertions that 'the ideas of anarchism have nothing in common with Futurism as proclaimed by Marinetti'" in response to his call for nationalist sentiment. However, "he received thunderous applause for his praise of the anarchists' 'magnificent gesture of destruction', his appeal to the 'proletariat immersing all society in a fearless insurrection and a burst of heroic violence', and his image of 'a tragic night of General Strike and revolution in a great modern city plunged into darkness by the dominating will of workers.'" Some were disenchanted by what they saw, such as the previously described Maria Rygier, who dismissed Marinetti as a poet rather than a politician; others were put off by the Futurists' willingness to participate in elections. But, while it was never generally embraced, Futurism was certainly taken seriously and adopted by some anarchists. Anarcho-Futurism developed a more intentional embrace of the "Dionysian spirit" and a distaste for the nationalism of mainstream

Futurism; the "Anarcho-Futurist Manifesto" from 1919 speaks also of burning books, of "Laughter and Love copulating with Melancholy and Hate", and so on, just with a few nods to the idea of an eventual anarchist society.

Things took a turn for Futurism and Marinetti when they formed an alliance with embittered veterans, returned home from WWI to scant welcome: the Arditi.

Arditi: "the daring ones"

> [The Ardito is] the Futurist at war, the bohemian avant-garde ready for everything, light-hearted, agile, unbridled; the gay power of a twenty-year-old youth who throws the bomb while whistling a song from a variety show... A perfect fusion of thought, beauty, action. The elegance of a primitive, child-like gesture, immediately followed by a gesture of improbable heroism. All the impulse, the force, the impetuosity of a man overflowing with Italian spirit. An aristocracy, therefore, of character, muscles, belief, courage, blood and brain... In the Arditi triumphs a totally modern and Italian youth, undisturbed by scepticism and corroding experiences... And because these are also the characteristics of the Futurist, I won't be wrong in defining the Ardito 'the Futurist at war' and the Futurist 'the Ardito of the artistic and political battle'...in fact, the Futurists have fought amongst the Arditi, and many Arditi are members of the Futurist Political Party.
>
> —F.T. Marinetti

Six million Italians served in WWI; about four million of them served on the front lines. During the war, the troops developed a disdain for those who had maneuvered their way into cushy military posts and a dislike of war profiteers. By the end of the war, these sentiments turned into a widespread distrust and hatred for the whole political and military establishment. Nowhere was this truer than among the Arditi, the elite Italian shock troops of the war. Something like the U.S. Marines, these soldiers received great acclaim, recognition, and privilege during the war, and had a strong self-image and culture based on being the best, the bravest, the most virile men in combat. Many fascist observers saw them as the embodiment of the Nietzschean Superman, or a reincarnation of the Praetorian Guard of Roman days.

Things were bad for veterans after the war. They felt abandoned by the military, and did not receive proper post-service benefits; their resentment

made them ripe for fascism, and fascist ranks swelled dramatically. For the Arditi, things were particularly rough—not only did they lose the respect and privilege they were accustomed to, they were virtually unemployable, feared by many, persecuted by the police, and incompatible with civilian life. They had been chosen as elite troops in the war for their personalities: "strong individuals endowed with physical courage and defiance of death... adventure types with a streak of anarchical, anti-authoritarian attitude." Once the war was over, they were perceived as enemies of the state and society because of the same traits. In response, they took up many different political formations: some explicitly fascist, some predominantly Futurist, and some anarchist. The Arditi veteran Mario Carli became a link between the Futurists and the Arditi, and wrote many "energetic and lyrical programmes" containing hyperbolic praise of the Arditi lifestyle and calls for the Arditi to cleanse Italy, "to kill the inner and outer monsters who ensnare our fatherland."

Meanwhile, Mussolini was preparing for his rise to power, and looking for more backers; he turned to the Futurists and Arditi. He formed the group *Fasci di Combattimento* in the spring of 1919 as a sort of umbrella fascist organization for veterans. Once secured in this way, Arditi participated in the attack on the offices of *L'Avanti*, and received financial backing from the same industrialists who funded Mussolini. Marinetti, for his part, seemed delighted by Mussolini, finding him "full of Futurist ideas." Six months later, his impressions were quite opposite; he found Mussolini to be a reactionary power and money-seeker. This constant reversal of perceptions is thematic of the relationship between the two; Mussolini alternately used him, dropped him, and regarded him with suspicion as circumstances dictated. Still, Marinetti joined the *Fasci di Combattimento*, more because it was an opportunity for recruiting Futurists than because of any particular affinity with fascism or combat. Two years later he came out in support of freeing Malatesta from prison; Marinetti, like Mussolini, was not reliably in any camp but his own.

Many attempts were made to marry all of these tendencies. Most formally, Mario Carli published an essay in the summer of 1919 titled "Parties of the Avant-Garde: What If We Tried To Collaborate?" calling for a pact between Futurists, Arditi, fascists, Socialists, Republicans, reformists, and syndicalists. "The aim of this alliance was to protect the working class against the disastrous economic and social policies of the government, and, in the long run, to overthrow the existing political order." Mussolini rejected this effort, denying that the Socialist Party had any revolutionary substance. While Mussolini may well have been right about that, it is certain that he was far more interested in personal gain and power than in forming coalitions for their own sake.

Only two years later, such proposals were distant memories. Armed Leftist defense units called the *guardie rosse* emerged in response to the fascist attacks. They largely consisted of the *Arditi del Popoli*, veterans who leaned anarchist; many of them had taken part in the Fiume adventure. Despite their anarchist tendencies, they defined themselves as an "anti-Fascist militia set up to contribute towards a normalization of civil life, and not to incite insurrection against the State" ; this was due in part to their alliance with socialists invested in the continued existence of the state, and in part to the emergency nature of the need to counter fascists, who were murdering people in the street by now. (A similar "practical" compromise took place in Spain sometime later, as described in section three.)

The largest contingents were in Rome (2,000 fighters) and Turin (1,300) with smaller contingents in perhaps ten cities; they were welcomed by "the popular classes... because [the *guardie rosse*] had no party affiliations and were led by experienced ex-combatants who knew how to employ their military skills against Fascist squadrons." They were supported by a "hetereogenous mixture of anarchists, syndicalists, socialists, communists, republicans, and Futurists", but were not supported by the Italian Communist Party; in retrospect, a Communist historian describes this lack of support as "the great missed chance of militant anti-Fascism prior to the March on Rome." In cities in which local Communists disobeyed their party's instructions and showed support for the *Arditi del Popolo*, their anti-fascist efforts met with great, if temporary, success.

The authorities responded swiftly, ordering the dissolution of the *guardie rosse* and imprisoning many leaders and members; those that survived this response, such as in Parma, began operating in secret. While they existed, they struck back blow for blow against fascist attacks, burning down fascist spaces when anarchist or socialist spaces were burnt, and responding similarly to murders. There were other anarchist Futurists besides the *Arditi del Popolo*, and some of them became active, militant anti-fascist combatants during the lead-up to and early years of Mussolini's reign. Notably, now-famous anarchist poet Renzo Novatore and his anarcho-futurist group in La Spezia (which included former Red Lotus Fiumans) collaborated with the *Arditi del Popolo*. In general, Italian anarchist anti-fascist resistance was widespread, and met with intense reprisals; but that is not our subject here.

> How could a brother be the *subject* of absolute hostility? The hypothesis will have to be inverted. There can be absolute hostility only *for* a brother. And the history of friendship is but the experience of what in this respect resembles an unavowable synonymy, a murderous tautology. ...It seems to me that Schmitt never speaks of the sister.
>
> —Jacques Derrida, reflecting on the Nazi Carl Schmitt

"If the anarchists are not careful, their enemies will write their history."

—Gaetano Salvemini

Total hatred between anarchists and fascists is inevitable and, I hope, permanent. It is only our enmity towards the world as it exists today that we hold in common; our specific critiques, methodology, visions of the future, and joys are generally quite different. Still, I think there is also a certain fratricidal impulse at the heart of our conflict, based in our common ancestry and the intermingling we have just reviewed. This understanding does nothing to erase the enmity, only to deepen it: we may be brothers, but we can never be sisters.

The anarchist failure in pre-fascist Italy was not only the failure to avoid collaboration with fascists, but the failure to seize the revolutionary moment; in that vacuum, it was seized by others. Not only did they lose the day to their enemies, but they lost many of their own, as anarchists frustrated by this ineffectuality defected to fascism. There are a few specific missed opportunities we can point to, such as the lost momentum after Red Week, during which there could have been a Leftist revolution: the overcaution of the CLG, a prominent labor union, prevented this uprising from meeting its fullest potential. Or: Malatesta plotted with Giuletti, the captain who delivered a ship to Fiume, and D'Annunzio to lead a leftist March on Rome in 1920—well before Mussolini's successful March—but the alliance failed over differences around the question of intervention in WWI. Or: the failure of the Socialist Party to support the Arditi del Popolo in their armed anti-fascist organizing— could the Right have been defeated even then, in the streets? What would have happened if the Socialists had not signed the "Pact of Conciliation" with the fascists in 1921? The Communist Party also ordered its members to stay out of the conflict; the fight was then only between anarchists, those who disobeyed their parties, unaffiliated anti-fascists, and the fascists. In a country so dominated by the Left, this was a heavy

blow.[f] Even as late as 1924, there was a chance when the Left united against Mussolini after fascists murdered the socialist parliamentarian Matteoti. Still, the Left did not act, and heavy repression precluded the possibility of most open resistance after that... although some people never stopped trying. In 1926, an Italian anarchist attempted to assassinate Mussolini, but failed.

But failure was not limited to these specific moments; rather, there was an overall and overwhelming incapability to meet the social energy in the streets with open arms, to show solidarity to ones' comrades over sectarian differences, and to recognize fascism for the deadly threat it was in time. There was also a more elusive incapability: the failure to produce a cultural and spiritual impetus stronger than those created by the fascists. Anarchists were simply not compelling enough to sway the hearts and minds of enough average Italians in the way that fascists did. This is not necessarily a bad thing: compelling others to follow an ideology is not a very anarchist activity. We can also fault elitism, and the condoning of unethical violence; as Arendt wrote about the German example, intellectuals enjoy often watching respectability crumble via the deployment of violence, and anarchist intellectuals were no less guilty than their bourgeois kin, sometimes mistaking all violence for revolutionary violence. And, as ever, the cycle of repression and recuperation continues: "If Italian democracy yielded to fascism without a fight, the latter spawned democracy anew when it found itself no longer corresponding to the balance of social and political forces."

In a time of liberal governance, anarchists can confuse their rebellion against all authority with causes they would never support out of context. May we remain critical at all times, and never mistake our enemies for friends, or the enemy within as a source of revolutionary vigor. Complicity is not inevitable.

f Gramsci, shockingly, "justified the withdrawal of communist militants from the *Arditi del Populo* thus: 'the tactic... corresponded to the need to prevent the party membership being controlled by a leadership that was not the party leadership.'"

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If the anarchists are not careful, their enemies will write their history

Chapters, posters, and additional material may be found at unquietdead.tumblr.com

The Unquiet Dead

Anarchism, Fascism, and Mythology

3. The Spanish Revolutionists and Their Betrayal

Helen Graham tells us of post-war Spain:

> The defeated cast no reflection. No public space was theirs. ...The Republican dead could never be publically mourned. The defeated were obliged to be complicit in this denial. Women concealed the violent deaths of husbands and fathers from their children in order to protect them physically and psychologically. In villages all over Spain, many kept secret lists of the dead. Sisters mentally mapped the location of their murdered brothers, but never spoke of these things. The silent knowledge of unquiet graves necessarily produced a devastating schism between public and private memory in Spain. It was a schism that would outlive even the Franco regime itself.

I write here in solidarity with these unquiet dead.

General Francisco Franco led a military coup against the newly formed Spanish Republic in July of 1936. While Franco won the war, he met with more concerted resistance from a wider swath of the Spanish population than fascists encountered anywhere else. That resistance was strong insofar as its inhabitants were already radicalized by the Left and accustomed to struggle. It failed insofar as some of its most radical participants made compromises with and were betrayed by the larger Left; as it did not reach out to the international Left and to colonized Morocco; and as England, France, and the United States refused to directly aid the Spanish anti-fascist struggle, a calculated decision made on the basis of the balance of power in Europe and those governments' fear of Left revolution.

There have been many exhaustive studies of the Spanish Civil War; I will not here attempt to offer a thorough explanation of most of the primary actors, or present more than a sketch of prewar and wartime events. Instead, I will briefly explore the cultural makeup of prewar Spain, particularly among anarchists and their opponents; the origins of Spanish fascism, and its international supporters; the causes and forms of resistance and resistance mythology in Spain; the collaboration of anti-authoritarian revolutionaries with the statist Left against fascism; the betrayal of anarchists by that Left; and the consequences of these successes and failures.

An abbreviated schematic of the players in the war

On the right were Franco and the majority of the military, supported by the explicitly fascist Falange and CEDA parties, and many landowners, bosses, members of the aristocracy, and the Spanish Catholic Church. They are sometimes called rebels, nationalists, or fascists in this piece. Franco and many of his forces were not explicitly fascist, but were materially and ideologically supported by many, including Mussolini and Hitler. Military forces included the *Africanistas*, Spanish troops who became experienced in combat and colonial occupation in Northern Africa; troops conscripted from Spanish Morocco; air operations largely conducted by Germany; and maritime attacks from Italy and Germany, supported by intelligence from U.S. corporations.

The Second Spanish Republic controlled the center from 1931-1939. It was repressive and conservative in its early days, then moved towards the socialist left with the Popular Front election in early 1936; the Civil War began in July of that year. Those who specifically supported the idea of the Republic were "Republicans"; however, all forces operating in resistance to Franco were frequently called Republican, over-simplifying the conflict into a two-sided war.

The Leftist and antipolitical forces included the CNT-FAI: by 1936, one organization with two wings, the FAI tending to be more anarchist, and the CNT more communist. At heart a labor union, it became a home for many affinity groups who carried out attacks before the war, including *Solidarios* and *Nosotros*. The CNT-FAI was a major participant in the Civil War: it gave birth to the Durruti Column and the Iron Column, among other fighting and supporting forces. Other anarchist forces of the time before and after the Civil War included *Mujeres Libres*, an anarcha-feminist organization; various egoists, freethinkers, and early eco-anarchists; the Modern School movement; *pueblos* and communes; many other organizations, social centers, and non-affiliated people.

There were also Communists, who became increasingly affiliated with the USSR and Stalinists over the course of the war, and POUM, a dissident-Communist union and fighting force, eventually targeted by other Communists as Trotskyist. However, Trotsky himself had public disagreements with the group, and by the time it was being attacked as Trotskyist POUM included people of many different political affiliations. The UGT was the most prominent socialist union. "Internationals", finally, were a mixture of anarchists, communists, socialists, and un-affiliated people who came from abroad to fight against Franco in the Civil War, both independently and as part of the International Brigades.

I. Spain before the war

The tradition of resistance to oppression in Spain long predates the Civil War, and even Spain's encounter with European Leftism. Outside observers have consistently found it remarkable: "Napoleon, who regarded Spain as an 'inanimate corpse,' was astonished to find 'that when the Spanish State was dead, Spanish society was full of life, and every part of it overflowing with powers of resistance.'" Emma Goldman asserted, "The Spanish are a race apart and their anarchism is not the result of books. They have received it with their mother's milk. It is now in their very blood." Though I cannot support claims about politics and blood, the cultural transmission of rebellion in Spain is at least as real as the cultural transmission of Christianity, tradition, and resistance to modernity that were manifested in Franco.

The *pueblos* of Spain bore a resemblance to the *soviets* of Russia: self-sustaining, internally focused communities that shared most things. This completeness of human relations "involved not only a deep sense of moral unity, common purpose, and mutual aid, but also a body of rights, or *fueros*, which defined the community's autonomy in local affairs and protected it from the encroachment of outside authority." As the Narodniks, and later the Bolsheviks, were inspired by the indigenous Russian form of self-governance, so the *pueblo* had a reciprocal relationship with Spanish anarchism, exemplified in the case of the 1933 tragedy of Casas Viejas. The anarchist community members of this Andalusian village knew how they related and wanted to relate to each other, and took up the power they needed to do that; out of the blue, Casa Viejas declared itself a liberated town. Their revolution lasted one day before they were slaughtered by the police; in one house, people were burned alive with their children. There were few survivors. Anarchists outside the village were inspired by their revolutionary example and outraged by their treatment; many of them came from similar small villages where they wished to see similar transitions, and feared similar results. The event "crystallized all the frustrations, resentments, and barbarities that finally caused the [Azaña] government to resign nine months later"; the middle class moved Right, afraid of the Left, and the working class moved further Left, outraged by the depravities of the Right.

The cultural and class makeup of Spain varied intensely by region during the period we are discussing. To the north, Catalonia had, and continues to have, a strong separatist tendency; it became autonomous shortly before the Civil War. The region includes Barcelona, a center of both government and revolutionary activity for many decades. Frequently, the north would be

in revolt while the south lay quiet, or vice-versa; this regional autonomy of action was a great strength of the revolutionary movement. As for culture, by Bookchin's quite condensed and stereotyped characterization, north of the Sierra Morena lay classical Spain: "stern, morally rigid, obsessed by an unyielding sense of responsibility and duty. To the south lies Andalusia: easy-going, pleasure-loving, and delightfully impulsive." Bookchin says the latter was due to successive colonizations, and particularly cites the Moorish occupation of the south as leaving behind a "hedonistic tradition."

Even earlier, the Romans installed the *latifundium* in the region, a plantation system of agriculture. Bookchin: "The *latifundium* could well be described as the agrarian ulcer of the Mediterranean world and in many respects bears comparison with the plantation economy of the American South." As in the American South, these sites of intense exploitation generated revolt. While Kern depicts the Spanish South as neglected by anarchists and more readily controlled by Communists by the time of the Civil War, Bookchin describes its earlier days as centers of anarchist activity. Economic disparity was brutal: a tiny fraction of the population held 33% of the land in the mid-1800s, while the 10 million smallest landowners owned less than 15%. The plight of the southern landless was even more desperate; the project of surviving by gaining their own private land therefore kept the landless politically engaged no matter how much repression they faced. Collectivized agriculture finally took hold in the South during the Civil War, at last addressing this economic injustice —but the peasant dream was realized for only a couple of years before Franco smashed it.

As the Catholic Church was particularly strong in Spain, and served as one of the dominant oppressors of the poor (especially the Leftist poor), Spanish anarchism has a long history of anti-Church struggle.[a] This is based not only in the mainstream[b] anarchist philosophical rejection of religion, but in a response to material conditions. While, on the one hand, the Church served as a social support and place of comfort for the poor, it was also one of their primary exploiters. Once the Church was dispossessed of its lands by the state (enclosure occurs on all fronts, after all), Bookchin says, "The higher clergy began to neglect its pastoral duties for the more lucrative realms of industry, commerce, urban real estate, and, according to the

a Orwell observes that a certain "hearts and minds" competition also plays into this dynamic. "To the Spanish people, at any rate in Catalonia and Aragon, the Church was a racket pure and simple. And possibly Christian belief was replaced to some extent by Anarchism, whose influence is widely spread and which undoubtably has a religious tinge."

b Some anarchists are religious, even Christian—Tolstoy, most famously—but most classical anarchists have been strictly atheist.

gossip of the day, brothels. The new investments transformed the Catholic Church from the largest landowner in Spain into the largest capitalist; its ideology, the most medieval and atavistic in Western Europe, transformed it from the social conscience of the ruling class into the most reactionary force in social life." While it maintained a hold in center-north Spain, the Church became unpopular among urban workers, even more so with southern laborers, who "viewed the Church as a pillar and perpetuator of a landed order that oppressed them." When the Second Republic took hold in 1931, secularization was one of its immediate reforms, and met with strong Church reaction. Graham: "...Catholic mobilization in 1930s Spain was predominantly that of lay people who, well before the Civil War itself, came to see themselves as engaged in a crusade to defend an endangered way of life." Graham considers the argument that secularization was anti-religious repression, but finds it ahistorical. "Conservative Catholics in 1930s Spain," she points out, "were outraged that their beliefs and practices were being constrained, but they themselves entertained no concept of civil and cultural rights within the Spanish state for those professing other religions, still less for freethinkers or atheists." This is the Spanish Catholic Church, after all, that conducted pogroms against Jews, decreed Jewish expulsion from Spain, and held the Spanish Inquisition a few centuries prior. However long ago that may seem, the Jewish expulsion law was not repealed until 1968.

The way of life for Church autocrats was indeed endangered by the Left, as it was for all those who benefited from the structure of oppression in pre-Franco Spain. The sixty years between anarchism's arrival in Spain and the outbreak of the war in 1936 were marked by many uprisings, insurrections, and intense labor struggles. I will not detail these; they are thoroughly described by Murray Bookchin in his work *The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years*. However, it is important to understand that they provided those who went on to fight fascism in Spain with tactical knowledge, personal experience in combat, and an imbricated *belonging* within revolutionary tissue. When not only your friends and comrades, but also the elders in your family, your neighbors, and people within your entire region have fought for freedom along various lines for decades, there is a sense of rightness of purpose and community in struggle that is hard to find within only one's own experiences and lifetime. The context of their ongoing revolutionary struggle in the face of death, torture, and imprisonment made the Spanish anarchists more willing and able to enter into struggle against those who promised to bring more of it.

"I believe, as I have always believed, in liberty. Liberty understood in the sense of responsibility. I consider discipline indispensable, but it must be self-discipline moved by a common ideal and a strong feeling of comradeship."

—Buenaventura Durruti, to Emma Goldman

Giuseppe Fanelli, an Italian disciple of Mikhail Bakunin, arrived in Spain in October 1868. Despite a nearly absolute language barrier, he was able to communicate "the Beautiful Idea"[c] to a small number of workers, including Anselmo Lorenzo, who later became known as "the grandfather of Spanish Anarchism." Anarchism spread outwards from those few workers remarkably quickly. For this reason, Bakunin was the dominant foreign anarchist influence in Spain for many years, although Peter Kropotkin and Nestor Mahkno became popular there as well in their time. Bakunin's conception of anarchy described "human reason as the only criterion of truth, human conscience as the basis of justice, individual and collective freedom as the only source of order in society."

There was both a strong trajectory of anarchist attack in Spain and also its false specter, raised by the Right and used as an excuse for repression. For example, the *Desheredados* (Disinherited) were a real group that performed assassinations and arsons in Andalusia in the 1870s-80s; the *Mano Negra* (Black Hand), a secret Andalusian society that supposedly planned to kill all landlords, was most likely invented by the police and newspapers. Regardless of particular truths and lies, "propaganda of the deed" became popular among many revolutionaries internationally after the nihilist group The People's Will assassinated Czar Alexander II in 1879, as discussed later in this text. Spain was no exception, especially once Kropotkin's writings on the issue entered the country in the 1880s. For those tired of the slow workings of labor organizing, propaganda of the deed provided a way to perform revolutionary acts individually or in small numbers. As labor organizing and the repression it faced were no less violent in those days, this was therefore not a choice between violence and nonviolence, or safety and risk, but primarily a matter of tactical preference.

The model of the affinity group, developed in response to the central logistical issue faced by anarchists—how to act together, but with autonomy—was a major contribution of Spanish anarchism to the international movement. Bookchin tells us the group structure comes from "the *tertulia*: the small,

c As anarchism was called by Voltairine de Cleyre, among many others of her time.

traditionally Hispanic [sic] group of male intimates who gather daily at a favorite café to socialize and discuss ideas." The Spanish anarchists did the same, but sometimes also planned actions, *attentados*, designed either as attacks against those responsible for ongoing oppression or as revenge for the repression, executions, tortures, and imprisonments of anarchists. While some have argued that practicing "propaganda of the deed" isolated Spanish anarchists from the working class, I take quite the opposite lesson from my evaluation of this history: those who refused to take dramatic action were the ones outside of the general current of class antagonism shaping the Spanish lower classes.

Bookchin makes the important point that these attacks, which are often contrasted with the "generous humanism" of anarchist ideals, are in no way actually separate from them: that Francisco Ferrer or Fermín Salvochea,[d] exalted as gentle saints, were no less anarchist than the assassins, arsonists, *pistoleros* and bank robbers with whom they kept company—and vice versa. Nor were they treated differently by the state; Ferrer was executed as a scapegoat for the Tragic Week uprising (which, it seems, in fact began spontaneously), and Salvochea was incarcerated for many years. Many anarchists have staged explanations of the right to use violence in self-defense, and of the necessity of expropriation to the process of revolutionary resistance. Regardless of one's feelings on those issues, it is necessary to keep in mind that the brutality and destructiveness of the State always far exceeded that of the anarchists. The guerrilla war between anarchists on one side, and bosses, landowners, and the government on the other, claimed—just between 1918 and 1923—900 lives in Barcelona alone, 1,500 in all of Spain. The vast majority of those deaths were the executions and murders of workers and revolutionists.

However, by Kropotkin's assessment in 1891: "...the development of the revolutionary spirit gains enormously from heroic individual acts... it is not by these heroic acts that revolutions are made." Though intrinsically entwined with *attentado*, syndicalism became the dominant form of anarchist organization and struggle in Spain with the creation of the CNT in 1910. Frequent strikes became a principal tactic: "[a]lthough many of these strikes would raise specific demands... others were strictly revolutionary. The strikers would pose no demands. Their purpose was to achieve *comunismo libertario*. When at last it was clear that this was not to come, the strikes would end as

d Bookchin describes Salvochea: "...a man of rare generosity and sympathy... [who] would often be found by his friends without a cap or a topcoat because he had given his own to the needy... a serene man, he was rarely austere or somber. His demeanor towards his friends was affectionate, and towards his enemies he displayed an equanimity that verged on irony."

suddenly as they had begun, and everyone would quietly return to work. Then the town would wait for the next opportunity. The swollen groups would shrivel back to a small nucleus of dedicated revolutionaries until another upsurge swept across the land."

Syndicalism in general refers to any form of unionization; anarcho-syndicalism is labor organization for the ultimate purpose of anarchist social revolution. Bookchin describes anarcho-syndicalism so:

> At the same time that syndicalism exerts... unrelenting pressure on capitalism, it tries to build the new social order within the old. The unions and the 'labor councils' are not merely means of struggle and instruments of social revolution; they are also the very structure around which to build a free society. The workers are to be educated in the job of destroying the old propertied order and in the task of reconstructing a stateless, libertarian society. The two go together. When all conditions have ripened to a point where social revolution is possible, the workers go on a general strike with the avowed aim of toppling capitalist society. All means of production and transportation cease to operate. The capitalist economy is brought to a standstill.

This model is more realistic and material than the nihilist tendency within anarchism would prefer; it is also, therefore, more susceptible to co-optation, reformist tendencies, and recuperation.[e] While the CNT, at first the most prominent of anarchist-populated unions in Spain (possessing also Communist and socialist members[f]), had its day of revolutionary strife, dissatisfaction with these probably inevitable tendencies led to the creation of the FAI in 1927. Because many prominent anarchists were in exile at the time, the founders of the FAI were largely unknown anarchists from small villages with fewer pre-conceived notions and foreign ideas. This meant

e Bookchin: "...German fascism was to annihilate two huge Marxian political parties with scarcely a flicker of resistance by their leaders and following. The German proletariat, in fact, was to become so completely divested of revolutionary initiative by its well-disciplined Social Democratic and Communist parties that Hitler marveled at the ease with which it was shackled to the totalitarian state."

f The CNT at first maintained ties with several international Communist, Socialist, and anarchist organizations, but broke with the Soviets entirely upon hearing about the Soviet suppression of the 1921 Kronstadt sailor's uprising. The repression at Kronstadt, in which several thousand workers were murdered for rebelling against the Taylorization of their work, marked a turning point in Soviet persecution of anarchists and other workers who did not toe the party line, and is considered by anarchists to have been one of the most serious Communist betrayals of revolutionary ideals. Lenin is reported to have ordered: "Shoot them down like pheasants."

the organization seriously discussed issues of all kinds, including seemingly trivial lifestyle matters, that had been left behind by the more formally labor-oriented CNT. The group was organized along the affinity group model, with expanding "groups of groups" composing a federation; this allowed pre-existing communities to continue to operate within it as such. From its basis within worker society, the FAI developed a deeply conflictual approach, and many affinity groups of *ilegales* given to robbery and *attentado* existed within it. The combination of the two unions (CNT-FAI) went on to be the best known source of anarchist fighters in the Civil War.

All of this militancy was necessary in Spain; by Kern's assessment, "Until 1931, anarchism survived as the only radical philosophy in Spain because it alone was sufficiently decentralized, militant, and violent to cope with governmental abuses." In the 1870s, barely years after anarchism arrived in Spain, hundreds were jailed and sixty-six were put into weighted sacks and thrown into the sea following a labor uprising; in the face of such intense repression, anarchism survived only by virtue of its remarkable plasticity. This plasticity was the result of community support. Anarchist values and practices were not limited to the militant young men who claimed actions, but were sustained across an entire population. In his book *Seven Red Sundays*, a novelization of the 1935 Madrid uprising, Ramón Sender (who came up entirely within this context, and knew his subject) describes an anarchist's elderly mother and community:

> When a comrade arrived at three in the morning, seeking a shakedown [place to sleep], he got it, and before he left next day, shared Germinal's hearty breakfast. ...The mother served them distrustfully until she saw in Germinal's eye his sympathy with them. When that happened she came and went at her ease and called the stranger 'son'. Afterwards, if the police came nosing, the old lady received them suitably and had some unsavory language for them about their dirty job. Some of the police feared her more than their own chiefs, because out of that gentle gray head poured bitter insults and searching words. ...In the district a police agent was always spoken of as a dog. They knew it well, and when it happened that the neighbors heard the old lady speaking, they aided her with a chorus. Other women appeared at the windows and the balconies adding to the trouble.

The anarchists and the police, the Civil Guards or *Guardia*, were at war from the beginning. The Civil Guards were deliberately selected from outside the communities they worked in to protect them from local influence; this also

had the effect of making locals entirely unsympathetic to the Guards' aims. Bookchin wryly assesses, "They walked in pairs, fully armed, and exuded a mistrust towards the community that soon enveloped them in hostility. A force apart, increasingly detested, the *Guardia* became easily unnerved and trigger-happy, escalating minor protests into riots and riots into insurrections. Whatever support the revolutionary groups could not mobilize with their literature and oratory, the *Guardia* eventually gained for them with its carbines."

In 1912, hundreds of CNT militants were arrested, and the CNT was forced underground; the entire labor movement was under attack. The premier drafted 12,000 workers into the army to break a railway strike—and was promptly assassinated by a young anarchist. The next year, his successor declared a general amnesty for many imprisoned strikers. In 1924, during another time of intense repression, over 5,000 anarchists were exiled from Spain; they went to their comrades in Germany, France, and Belgium, and waited until it was safe to return, exchanging and refreshing their ideas and tactics in the meantime. (It was in this way that the ideas of the Ukrainian anarchist Nestor Makhno, who argued for the creation of revolutionary armies, gained currency in Spain. He made a particular impact on Buenaventura Durruti, the famed illegalist anarchist who led just such an army in the war, though its primary target was the fascists rather than the State itself.) Again and again, the movement was decimated, only to rebound elsewhere with renewed ferocity.

This is in part because Spanish anarchists were fighting *for* something. They were not yet disillusioned by the horrors of Soviet repression, as anarchists outside the USSR became after reports from Emma Goldman and others on the situation there, and as the international Left became following Krushchev's denouncement of Stalin in 1956. Before the Civil War, Spanish anarchists fully believed they could realize revolutionary utopia in their lifetimes. This gave them an edge over not just the fascists, but also the "realistic" views of the Communists, who advocated a gradual transition of society, who saw even fascism as a possibly necessary stage of late (!) capitalism on the way towards communism. The power of their beliefs caused anarchists to not only engage in armed conflict with the state, capitalists, and landowners, but also to fight for the liberation of women and against the bourgeois morality that oppressed them. Anarchists pushed, for example, for the adoption of CNT bylaws that admitted women to membership and recognized the principle of sexual equality, called for secular education and the eight-hour workday, and demanded the abolition of child labor.

The role of Spanish anarchists in education among the severely disenfranchised lower classes cannot be overstated. In 1900, nearly 70% of the Spanish population was illiterate; anarchists saw education as a way towards personal, economic, and political empowerment for the working-class. Bookchin: "...during the late nineteenth century in Spain, the village Anarchists were virtually the sole voices of science and modernism in the sierra... Always ready to expound upon their views, they formed the center of all discussions on religion, politics, science, morality, and education. Many children in the *pueblos* acquired the rudiments of reading and writing from these conscientious 'apostles of the Idea.'" In more formal terms, Spanish anarchist Francisco Ferrer founded the Modern School; his model of free education has been internationally adopted and adapted since.[g] Alas, he was executed by a firing squad.

Again, none of these examples of Spanish anarchist social projects should be seen as excuses for anarchist violence, or contrasted with it; all of these elements went together, as the authorities well knew. They prepared anarchists for their upcoming conflict with the fascists: the only separation between the anarchist war *against* the Church, the State, and capitalism—which was also their war *for* freedom, equality, education, and material sufficiency—and their antagonism towards fascists is the separation forced upon them by their betrayers.

g Notably, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, Voltairine de Cleyre, and others founded one of these Modern Schools in Ferrer's memory in New York City.

"Without Africa I cannot explain myself to myself or to my comrades in arms."

—General Franco

"I will save Spain from Marxism, whatever the cost."
"And if that means shooting half of Spain?"
"As I said, whatever the cost."

—General Franco, in an interview with Jay Allen

Franco himself did not necessarily identify as a fascist; nor did many of his forces. The Falange party appears to have been the only explicitly fascist organization in the mix. However, Franco's rebellion was heavily supported by Mussolini and Hitler; his ideology was founded in reaction to the same material conditions as fascism ever is; and his values are generally shared by all fascist movements, although he did not in turn share all of their practices or points of ideology. The dictatorship he led for decades after the war differs in no particular way from other fascist governments, besides its longevity. We should not let our observations of history (or indeed the present) be dictated by the particular words our enemies choose to describe themselves; we must call a pig a pig, whatever its lipstick.

The Spanish fascists did not[h] come from the Left, as they largely did in Italy. Instead, fascism was generated in Spain by those who were, justly, scared of the insurgent Left: the Church, the landowners, and other beneficiaries of the status quo. I believe this is because the Left was engaged in fiercer struggle than it was elsewhere—there was not the sense, as there was in Italy, that Leftist struggles were not militant enough or making enough headway. Tactical diversity within the Left allowed people to be as militant as they wanted to be; it was only the reaction to this militancy, therefore, that generated fascism. This is not to blame these revolutionists for the rise of fascism, but rather to absolve them of it. While in Italy and Argentina, as I have illustrated elsewhere in this text, the Left hesitated and left a vacuum filled by fascism, one cannot really blame the far Left in Spain for the same; they seldom hesitated at all. If anyone is to blame besides the fascists themselves, it is the progressive Republican administration of 1931-3, who

h There were a couple of Catalonian independence groups described as "para-fascist" on the Left, but they were put down by the Republic. As a nationalist group, they used language about the invasion of "foreign dung" that would lead to "de-Catalanization." This is a common and concerning theme within nationalist groups not displaced from their "homeland", no matter their seemingly positive orientation.

failed to fully demilitarize public order, or institute enough economic shifts to fully upset traditional power. Instead, their ineffectual attempts opened the gate for a more conservative and repressive government to follow; an answering swerve towards socialism; and the final fascist reaction. This is perhaps paralleled in our current moment.

General Franco led a military coup, and so it is the military that most merits close examination in the rise of Spanish fascism. According to Helen Graham's research, the loss of Spanish empire reduced the need for the large officer corps of the Spanish military. These officers, feeling their positions threatened, "came to see themselves as the defenders of Spain's unity and hierarchy and of its cultural and political homogeneity, as consubstantial with the country's historic greatness. Indeed, many in the military elite took this one step further, interpreting their defence of this idea of 'Spain' as a new *imperial duty*." Franco installed *Africanistas*—Spanish colonial officers—as the teaching staff of the Spanish military academy at Zaragoza. "The academy became the forcing ground for ideas of imperial rebirth, of the military as the guardian and savior of Spain, and was thus an integral part of an emergent politics of an ultra-nationalist right." This is reminiscent of both Mussolini's ideas around the re-invention of the Roman Empire, and the dashed imperial ambitions of transitional Germany. And, "in France in June 1848, it was the veteran generals of Algerian colonization who led the repression of the uprising in Paris. Arguably, the French proletariat was doomed to another generation of repression by their failure to concern themselves with the plight of those across the Mediterranean."

The experiences of the Spanish military in African colonies became the foundation under their approach to the Civil War. Graham: "In villages across the rebel [fascist]-held south there was systematic brutality, torture, shaving and rape of women, and mass public killings of both men and women in the aftermath of conquest. Sometimes villages were literally wiped off the map by repression. The war was being fought as if it were a colonial campaign against insubordinate indigenous peoples. Spain's landed aristocracy, often the fathers and elder brothers of *Africanista* army officers, viewed the landless poor of the south as virtual slaves without humanity or rights." As described in section eight of this text, Hannah Arendt foregrounds the rise of fascism in Germany in the colonization of Africa; others have found that the exploitation of African natural resources and the enslavement of African people by Europeans and Americans is fundamental to capitalism;[i] and still others find *the plantation* to be the dominant, ongoing form of

i Frank Wilderson, Saidiya Hartman, others within the Afropessimism discourse.

primitive accumulation by capitalism, wherever and whenever it takes place.[j] As Southern Spain both retained the Roman *latifundium* plantation structure and had been shaped by a long-term, multicultural, "Moorish" colonization, it is a bitterly significant reoccurrence that both Moroccan troops and those experienced in dominating them were at the forefront of overthrowing the Republic by such brutally familiar tactics.[k] Class never left the conversation, either: landowners rode alongside the fascists to reclaim the land the Republic had redistributed. "Rural laborers were killed where they stood, the 'joke' being they had got their 'land reform' at last—in the form of a burial plot."

It was not, however, the Republic that formed the primary enemy of the fascists. Nor was it a racialized enemy—while there was little anti-racist analysis to be had in 1930s Spain, there was also little racist ideology. (The Jews, after all, had been expelled long ago; perhaps anti-Semitism would have played a larger role in this era if it had not already in the past.) In this case, the Other was the Left: its tactics, its participants, and its entire imaginary. "The conspirators and their cronies were not rising up against the republican government, but rather against the revolutionary process that had been maturing in Spain since 1931. The pretexts used by the rebels and their allies, particularly the church—such as the persecution of the clergy and the existence of a Marxist threat—were false." As the Left in Spain had such indigenous roots in the *pueblo*, to attack the Left meant to attack the entire proletariat and those beneath—particularly the rural landless. The reason for the breadth of anti-fascist resistance in Spain was the same as the reason for these scorched-earth tactics—to be Spanish, unless you were a member of the upper class, deeply religiously conservative, or a military officer, was with very little exception to be an anti-fascist. And many of these fascists-by-class called for such purges, purifications, and blood sacrifices in the days after the coup, an example of the Manichaean mindset so typical of fascists everywhere (and from which their opposition, it must be said, was far from exempt.) The consequences were extreme. Graham:

> People of all ages and conditions fell victim to this 'cleansing'. What they had in common was that they were perceived as representing the changes brought by the Republic. This did not just mean the politically active — although Republican members of parliament or village mayors were primary targets for liquidation if caught. Nor did it only mean

j A critique leveled by many, but most intriguing to me in Donna Haraway's "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin."

k In another horrible symmetry, Spanish occupiers—who went on to be fascist—used poisonous gas against its colonial population in Morocco, foreshadowing its use by German fascists in their concentration camps.

> those who benefited materially from the Republic's redistributive reforms—though urban workers, tenant farmers, and agricultural laborers were killed in their thousands. It also meant 'cleansing' people who symbolized cultural change and thus posed a threat to old ways of being and thinking: progressive teachers, intellectuals, self-educated workers, 'new' women. Rebel violence was targeted against the socially, culturally, and sexually different.

Not only did these attacks focus practically against those likely to oppose them, they "annihilated 'home' as a safe space." This was the very beginning of the now-familiar, then less-articulated, state of exception that was to characterize Franco's rule.[1]

If the fascists found few allies among their own people, they had plenty abroad. Hitler and Mussolini began contributing to Franco's efforts within a week of the beginning of the war. "[A]bove all things, Hitler and Mussolini intervened in Spain because they saw it as the most effective way of changing the balance of power in Europe." By claiming the anti-communist discourse, the fascists were able to "neutralize British opposition to their escalating involvement." This rather neatly demonstrates the problem with claiming to not be fascist, yet holding common interests with them. Furthermore, it left the Spanish Republic with no choice but to seek the USSR as an ally, though it was not necessarily its first choice: it foresaw the internal political disharmony that would come with such an ally. The USSR, meanwhile, was motivated less by either impulses of solidarity or plots to take over the world, but more by the cynical observation that Nazi tanks which had conquered Spain could then roll over Soviet borders.

The U.S., British, and French governments, all of whom the Republicans hoped would aid them, refused to intervene. This is largely because of these countries' cynical considerations around the balance of power in Europe, but is also partly a failure of the Left within those countries to push their leadership (or indeed their constituency) to aid the Republic; Graham chalks this up, in part, to the history of pacifism within the European labor movement, left over from the First World War. In fact, England, France, Germany, and Italy all signed a pact of noninterference, though Italy and Germany straightaway ignored it. England actually hoped for Franco to win quickly, which it thought would prevent the war from turning into a

1 While Agamben, following Arendt, finds this phenomenon most fully articulated in the Nazi concentration camps, the process is not linear or bound by location, having existed within colonies, slave plantations, and anti-Jewish pogroms for many years before.

generalized European conflict; protect British interests in Spain from Leftists; and prevent a Leftist revolution that would aid the USSR, and possibly agitate Leftists within England. Franco, Paz asserts, "was a product made in France and England, for he guaranteed the protection of the global empire (including Spain) maintained by those two countries." While Britain was actively hostile to the Republicans, France merely followed suit, seeing its interests as bound up with those of England more than with Spain; many French cititzens, inside and outside the government, covertly sent aid to Spain, and allowed people going to join the International Brigades through French borders. As for the United States, perhaps 2,800 American volunteers came to fight with the Republic—but most had to sneak their way across, and faced harassment and blacklisting when they returned home. Unsurprisingly, most U.S. volunteers were first or second-generation immigrants. Graham characterizes their participation as an aspect of ongoing European diaspora:

> In fighting fascism in Spain these exiles and migrants were, then, taking up unfinished business that went back at least as far as the 1914-18 war. Its dislocations had brutalized politics, inducing the birth of the anti-democratic nationalisms that had physically displaced them. For exiles and migrants too, left internationalism was a form of politics quite naturally reinforced by their own diasporic condition. It also signified a powerful antidote to the other, literally murderous, forms of politics inhabiting their own countries. The stakes were raised further by the economic depression of the 1930s. Mass unemployment and deprivation—particularly in urban areas—accelerate political polarization by seeming to announce the collapse of an untenable capitalist economy that was still being defended by the forces of the Right. The brigaders felt that by going to fight the military rebels and their fascist backers in Spain, they were also striking a blow against economic and political oppression across the whole continent. They were thus quite conscious of themselves as political soldiers in an ongoing European civil war.

The international nature of this engagement manifested on both sides; according to an interview with Adam Hochschild, author of *Spain in Our Hearts*, Franco's fascists found support among corporate America. The CEO of Texaco, Torkild Rieber, provided Franco with a "steady and guaranteed supply of oil", violating US law by shipping the oil on Texaco tankers and extending credit to Franco. Moreover, Rieber used his relationship with various ports to monitor the movement of oil destined for the Republicans, and passed this information along to Franco. Twenty-nine such tankers were destroyed, damaged or captured by Spanish fascists before they could refuel

the Republican forces. Since the Republicans could not get oil from England or France, and therefore only acquired it in dribs and drabs, this was a major blow—while Franco went fully supplied, courtesy of Rieber.[m] And U.S. complicity with Franco ran deep; Texaco was not alone. Gerassi:

> The United States was neutral only on paper. In fact, while all U.S. and Canadian government agencies, and after a while those of other countries (except the Soviet Union and Mexico) as well, stopped shipments of food, arms, ammunition, drugs and fuel to the established, freely-elected Spanish Republican Government, no such agency tried to stop aid to the fascists. Rockefeller's Standard Oil (Exxon today), the Vacuum Oil Co., and Texaco provided Franco with all the oil he needed, and on credit. Charles Foltz, the Associated Press correspondent in Madrid in 1945, reported that Franco told him: "Without American petrol, American trucks and American credits, we would never have won the war."

To return to Graham's point, the Republican American volunteers, a vast number of whom had been engaged in labor struggle in the United States before volunteering in Spain, were continuing their class struggle against some of the same bosses, just in an attenuated form. The international civil war between rich and poor, "tradition and modernity, fixed social hierarchy against fluid, more egalitarian modes of politics" was real. By Arendt's analysis, governments across Europe were frightened by the International Brigades because they demonstrated that people were willing to participate in ideological struggle beyond the boundaries of their own countries, but retained a sense of their own nationality; they did not assimilate, and so had "infiltrated, as refugees and stateless persons, the older nation-states of the West." This threatened the nation-state's conception of itself as a valid, contiguous, and fundamental mythology.

m This aid went largely under the radar, but Hochschild reports a scandal over Rieber's collaboration with the Nazis: "In 1940, Rieber's propensity for hiring Nazis to work at Texaco meant that there were German Nazis in Texaco's office in New York and Texaco's office in Berlin who were using the company's internal communication system to send intelligence data about American industry to the Nazis. This was discovered by British intelligence, which I suspect must have been eavesdropping on the transatlantic cable. They leaked the story to the *New York Herald Tribune*. There was a big to-do. Rieber lost his job. But he landed on his feet because General Franco, who was grateful for all the help Rieber had given during the Spanish Civil War, made him chief buyer in the United States for Nationalist Spain's oil monopoly."

"Better Vienna than Berlin!"

—a 1934 Spanish Socialist slogan, in reference to Austrian Leftist resistance to fascism vis-á-vis German acquiescence

"There are no other people so worthy of living and dying with."

—Emma Goldman on Durruti and the FAI

In 1931, as the Second Republic was declared, the Spanish economy seemed upon the brink of failure. The poor of Spain, often the same as the workers of Spain, saw anarchism as not only desirable on a political level, but in an economic sense—it might actually materially provide what capitalism had not. The explicitly anarchist FAI saw a huge swell in membership over the CNT, which had anarchist influences but was largely socialist at this point. As the Republic's efforts towards land reform, which "rais[ed] expectations without delivering land to the peasants" proved inadequate, the FAI's more radical stance on land redistribution began to appeal; meanwhile, the Republic's half-hearted pursuit of its secularization goal angered the Church without greatly lessening its material power. Unfortunately for the Republic, expectations for its reforms were so high that even its actual progress on these fronts were seen as disappointments rather than success. "[F]earful of alienating the very classes it was obliged to oppose", it simply did not go hard enough to succeed in its goals. Those who had voted in the Republic became quickly disillusioned by it; simultaneously, Spanish anarchist goals broadened along popular lines. Kropotkin's economic mutualism began to make inroads into Spanish anarchist philosophy: "'excessive generosity to workers', not vengeance upon the rich, would be the watchword of the revolution" in this new light.[n] Between all of these factors, revolution seemed on the horizon.

There was conflict between the FAI and CNT and the tendencies each represented, though they were never really discrete entities. The *treintistas*, 30 CNT members concerned with the trajectory of the FAI, published a statement that "denounced the 'simplistic' concept of the organization's concept of revolution, warning that it would lead to a 'Republican fascism'"; while the critique was framed as tactical disagreement, it mostly spoke to CNT

n While Bakunin thought the amount workers received should be proportionate to the work they performed, Kropotkin called for the prioritization of need: "Need will be put above service... it will be recognized that everyone who cooperates in production to a certain extent has in the first place the right to live comfortably." This is, however scanty on the face of it, a turn towards recognizing that humans are not equally provided with ability, but ought to be equally provided with access to resources.

concerns about reaction against FAI attacks that might crush the movement. By Bookchin's analysis, the *treintistas* misjudged the general mood, and the statement served to isolate these moderates from the general population of workers, who were much more willing to engage in or support attacks than to plot a "reasonable" course that might end in government collaboration. In contrast, the FAI spoke to people's emotions, their revolutionary spirit. Furthermore, its activity meant that anarchists and their fellow travelers of the moment were far more ready to oppose the fascist reaction when it finally came than was the divided and struggling government. While the union has long been a useful means of organization for revolt, it is also a means of recuperation for that revolt, and the CNT was no exception. Dauvé: "...the integration of Spanish anarchism in the state in 1936 is only surprising if one forgets its nature: the CNT was a union, an original union undoubtably but a union all the same, and there is no such thing as an anti-union union. Function transforms the organ. …Anarchist union though it may have been, the CNT was a union before it was anarchist."

In 1931, the Republic gave the police shoot-on-sight orders for the FAI. This was part of a divide-and-conquer strategy by the state: the CNT was treated permissively, and the FAI punished. Rather presciently, Juan García Oliver (Durruti's comrade, who would later join the Republican government) observed that the laws passed against the FAI "gave the government extraordinary powers similar to those claimed by dictatorship. What was to prevent a new fascist group from seizing control of the Republic and making use of those powers after [Prime Minister] Azaña destroyed the anarchists?" While this precise event did not occur, this observation is a crystallized moment of history folding upon itself, even shimmering slightly: displaying the repression then, the coming betrayal, and the eventual fascist dictatorship. In this story, the anarchists were doomed to die—it was just a question of when, and by the hands of which particular form of state power. This sort of recursive tragedy is a common thread in most stories of resistance.

As the CNT dealt with attacks and disruptions from the fascist Falange, the FAI engaged in a "cycle of insurrections" from 1932-33. Many were deported or imprisoned during this cycle. In 1933, the Casas Viejas tragedy disillusioned those who still had faith in the possibility or worth of engaging with the government; the end of the Republic was nigh for the Left as well as the Right. There were massive strikes and rallies calling for the release of prisoners, including a 60,000-person CNT rally in Barcelona's largest bullring. The CNT and FAI launched a massive no-voting campaign to signal popular disengagement with the government, which had acted in bad faith by

imprisoning so many workers. In response to those calling for engagement with the government to prevent fascism, people reasoned that "fascism would at least compel the proletariat to rise in revolution, whereas a reformist victory would simply lead to a piecemeal but ultimately more dehabilitating repression." Sadly, in the course of the next six years, the anarchists partially engaged with the government, met with diffuse repression from the center left, rose in revolution against fascism—and were brutally crushed by both the government and the fascists. They tried some of everything, and were therefore destroyed from all angles.

The Socialist and Communist parties, though on the rise in the early 1930s, had historically received less support from the people than anarchists did. In Barcelona, Bookchin notes, "where employer and police violence turned every major strike into a near-insurrection, the [Socialist] party was simply irrelevant and its isolation from the workers complete. That the Socialist Party and the UGT [the largest socialist union] did not succeed in remaining consistently reformist is due more to the mounting crisis in Spanish society than to any latent militancy in the Socialist leadership." Spanish Leftism was always drawn to conflict. However, from the opening days of the Republic, "the UGT was rapidly becoming an organ of the state itself and using its new powers to reduce its rival. The Anarcho-syndicalists could have no illusions as to what would happen to them if a purely Socialist government should come into power." Still, they voted one in anyway. Communist unions such as the UGT and PSUC, the Communist Party itself, and the POUM (a Trotskyist group formed around this time that played a significant role in both the Civil War and the civil war behind Republican lines), formed the Popular Front and ran for office in early 1936. The Popular Front in Spain, by Bookchin's assessment, was an imported, international formation sponsored by the USSR, which claimed to be a tactical maneuver that realistically faced the necessity of preventing the spread of fascism across Europe—but functioned actually as a) a way for the Communist Party to consolidate power, and b) an incentive for Western democracies to sign pacts with the USSR against Germany. Despite this function, anarchists chose to partially support this government; they were offered a concession they could not refuse.

1933 ended with a brutally suppressed uprising in the region of Aragon, most vigorously fought and most devastatingly defeated in Saragossa. (13,000 children of Aragonese revolutionaries were brought to Catalonia by comrades to be cared for in relative safety—a touching exodus horribly mocked in Franco's future redistribution of his enemies' children to institutions and fascist families.) In October 1934, an attempted revolutionary general strike

became an armed rebellion in the region of Asturias. General Franco—still within his role as an officer of the Republican army—"deployed both Moroccan troops and the Foreign Legion [to suppress the uprising], fearing that Spanish conscripts were not to be trusted politically." Reprisals for these uprisings were quite severe: 30,000 people were imprisoned, and often tortured by the police. The goal of gaining the release of those prisoners, and regaining other political freedoms suspended in response to the rebellions, motivated anarchists to participate in the next election as they never had before.

The Popular Front was intended not only as a productive truce among the Left, but as a reforming mechanism; Prieto, a prominent Socialist, said in his May Day speech of 1936 that the Republic would serve as a framework for the 'internal conquest' of Spain. An end to the *latifundium*, a redistribution of economic power—all of this was supposedly on the table for the Popular Front-governed Republic, although disillusionment from the inadequate reforms of 1932 worked against the possibility of popular faith in governmental success. But workers took matters into their own hands, opening the jails or taking over the prisons from within, organizing huge strikes and demonstrations—Spain was on the brink of revolutionary change, no matter whether it had begun with an election. And, despite the ensuing betrayal of anarchists and POUM by the rest of the Popular Front, it was not necessarily the wrong choice for them to participate in this election; CEDA and the Falange, both fascist parties, were on the rise. Bookchin rather understates the case: "In such ominous situations, who controls the state, with its arms and monopoly of violence, is not a matter of complete indifference."

Unfortunately, fascists do not win strictly by election. Upon seeing the results of the 1936 election, the Falange party agreed to support Franco's planned military coup. The Falange had been harassing the CNT for some time, and the CNT-FAI held a one-day general strike in April to protest their activities. Well aware of the dangers of fascism, the CNT-FAI spoke urgently about the possibility of a military coup, but their warnings fell on deaf ears. According to Graham, Marxist historical determinism is a bit to blame; many non-anarchist Leftists felt that fascism must be another step in the progress of capitalism towards socialism, and, however unlikely they believed a coup to be, "in the final confrontation the victory of the latter [socialism] was assured." In the face of this complacency, the FAI pivoted from petitioning the state to beginning its own anti-fascist preparations. In Barcelona, workers guarded their headquarters, patrolled the streets, and lay in wait with weapons.

The coup began on July 17th of 1936. 60% of the army went over to Franco on the first day, though the navy remained loyal to the Republic. Franco also brought over 100,000 Moroccan troops to fight for him on the front lines, received 200,000 Italian troops, 60,000 Portuguese troops, and received serious air support from Italy and Germany, as well as ground and financial support. Meanwhile, the Republican forces over the course of the entire war consisted of 100,000 socialist militiamen, 100,000 anarchists, 100,000 loyal regulars, 50,000 internationals of varying political tendencies, 40,000 Communists, and 8,000 Trotskyists. By Gerassi's assessment, "in armaments the Republicans were out-rifled ten to one, out-cannoned 20 to one, and out-airplaned and out-tanked 100 to one" ...leaving aside the question of their lack of fuel.[o]

Yet, the Republican forces held the upper hand at first because of the anarchist material readiness against the coup—and something more ethereal. Orwell considers that the initial repulsion of the coup was made possible only by "people who were fighting with a revolutionary intention—i.e. believed that they were fighting for something better than the status quo. In the various centres of revolt it is thought that three thousand people died in the streets in a single day. Men and women armed only with sticks of dynamite rushed across the open squares and stormed stone buildings held by trained soldiers with machine-guns. ...Even if one had heard nothing of the seizures of the land by the peasants, the setting up of local soviets, etc., it would be hard to believe that the Anarchists and Socialists who were the backbone of the resistance were doing this kind of thing for the preservation of capitalist democracy, which especially in the Anarchist view was no more than a centralized swindling machine." He adds later, "During the first two months of the war it was the Anarchists more than anyone else who had saved the situation, and much later than this the Anarchist militia, in spite of their indiscipline, were notoriously the best fighters among the purely Spanish forces." They had, after all, been preparing for this moment for sixty years.

This response was not without concerning aspects. 7,000 clergy were killed during the initial anti-fascist uprising—by workers of various political identities, but certainly including anarchists. Given what we know of the longstanding feud between the Church and the far Left of Spain, and the Church's material backing of Franco's coup, this is not surprising; there was

o Gerassi demonstrates his political bias by rather outrageously claiming in the next sentence: "But after the various militia were welded into one disciplined army (by communists), only the superior materiel could defeat the Republicans." The question of militarization will be discussed in detail later.

no incongruence between the ideals of the Spanish anti-fascists and this violence. It seemed necessary to them to desecrate the sacred representations of the traditions they sought to destroy, and to kill their personal oppressors. However, it damaged Republican Spain's reputation abroad in the early days, when it most needed support, and delegitimized the government for its failure to prevent such extra-judicial killings. When considering this event, it is worth bearing in mind what Graham terms a "fundamental assymetry of violence" between what occurred in fascist and Republican zones. The Republicans killed those they saw as directly responsible for the evils in their world, and so did the fascists—it is just that, for the fascists, that meant essentially everyone.

the comrades

Durruti[p]

Buenaventura Durruti, both during the Civil War and before it, stood out in the anarchist imagination as an exemplary revolutionary. He died when he was 40, only a few months into the war, from an accidental shot by a soldier in his unit. Before then, he carried out many attacks, assassinations, and bank robberies; visited France, Chile, Argentina, and Cuba while on the run; escaped from prison several times; engaged in open labor organizing; and was one of the first to respond against Franco's uprising. Kern suggests that Durruti "possessed Bakunin's 'revolutionary instinct' for seizing every possible opportunity to revolt." Emma Goldman, who met him during the war, wrote after his death:

> If then I consider our comrade Durruti the very soul of the Spanish Revolution it is because he was Spain. He represented her strength, her gentleness as well as her rugged harshness so little understood by people outside of Spain. ….when I met him at the Front he and his gallant comrades were defending with their bare hands, but with a spirit that burned at red-white heat. There I found Buenaventura Durruti on the eve of an offensive surrounded by scores of people coming to him with their problems and needs. To each one he gave sympathetic understanding, comradely direction and advice. Not once did he raise his voice or show impatience or chagrin. Buenaventura had the capacity to put himself in the place of another, and to meet everyone on his own ground, yet retaining his own personality. I believe it was this which helped to create the inner discipline so extraordinary among the brave militias who were the pioneers of the anti-Fascist struggle. And not only

p For a deep reading of Durruti's life and actions, see Abel Paz.

discipline, but confidence in the man and deep affection for him.

Durruti's first affinity group, *Solidarios* (which included his best friend Francisco Ascaso, who died in the early days of the war, and Juan García Oliver, who later joined the government) killed both a former governor and the Archbishop of Saragossa in retaliation for the murder of anarchist moderate Seguí—who, ironically, opposed their violent tactics in life. They hunted others, performed several bank robberies, and trafficked in weapons. The group were arrested by French police in 1924, and accused of planning to kidnap the Spanish king during a state visit to Paris; proudly, the *Solidarios* agreed that "they planned to hold Alfonso in return for the dissolution of the dictatorship." Shockingly, at least from a modern perspective, romantic publicity and solidarity protests made it impossible for any government to hold the *Solidarios* captive for long—even on the charge of planning to kidnap their king!—and after a year in prison, they returned to revolutionary activity in various countries. They came back to Spain and became active in the CNT and FAI in the early 1930s.

As Franco began his coup attempt, a group of anarchists including Durruti and Ascaso fought the fascists back from Barcelona on July 19th and 20th. "As bad news poured in from the rest of the country, it became apparent that anarchists had managed to win the most spectacular victory of the loyalist Republican side." However, Ascaso died in the final moments of the battle, a great blow to Durruti both practically and emotionally. As Oliver joined the government, Durruti had to continue in the war without either of his best friends, comrades, and co-conspirators. After Ascaso's massively-attended funeral, Durruti entered the field as the commander of a militia army: the Durruti Column. The Column became famous among the anarchist militias, though its fate was tragic, misled by bad military advice. They, along with the Iron Column and other militia armies, marched towards the front, pausing frequently to execute priests, landowners, and police, and to support the formation of communes along the way. For them, the revolution and anti-fascist activity remained inseparable.

Stories about Durruti's revolutionary virtue proliferated. "One combatant, caught in a firefight west of Bujaraloz, looked up to see Durruti at the head of the patrol throwing grenades; another remembers him accepting rejection of his advice on a particular strategy without pulling rank." Even before the war, he took his principles seriously to the point of unnerving others. "One evening Durruti brought a shocked silence to the *La Tranquilidad* bar[q] when

q "described by one anarchist habitué as 'the least tranquil cafe' in the neighborhood"

he responded to the plea of a beggar for money by reaching inside his jacket pocket to fill the hand of the appellant with a huge pistol, offering the advice: 'Take it! Go to a bank if you want money!'" As Gilles Dauvé puts it, "Durruti and his comrades embodied an energy which had not waited for 1936 to storm the existing world." Even two months into the war, he considered robbing the Bank of Spain for the money his militia needed; his plans formed and ready to execute, he at last conceded to asking the government for the money first. Luckily for the bank, the Republic came through.

There is a monument to Durruti in his hometown; over half a million people attended his funeral—the last large anarchist demonstration in pre-Franco Spain. It is quite difficult to imagine such a criminal receiving similarly large, long-standing, and public support today... but Durruti came up not only within violent and criminalized labor struggle, but also within the preceding Spanish tradition of the "permanent guerilla." During his young adulthood, there was a rise in labor repression and *attentados* in response; assassinations of labor leaders and corresponding assassinations of politicians and bosses increasingly meant that everyone went armed; the bosses hired goons, agent provocateurs were underfoot, and a general atmosphere of illegality prevailed. "So convinced were they of the righteousness of their cause that a few individualists attempted to convert policemen to anarchism", presumably as they were being arrested. Bookchin quotes José Peirats on the underground culture of the times:

> ...extreme tendencies flourished in the anarchism of those times—stormy for some and times of hibernation for the majority. Secret meetings in the mountains were disguised as the excursions of ingenuous nudists, devotees of pure air, and sunbathers. All of this forms a picturesque contrast if one bears in mind that a sincere return to nature was perfectly compatible with conspiratorial planning, the chemistry of explosives, pistol practice, the interchange of periodicals and underground leaflets, and campaigns against tobacco and alcohol.

In 1927, one such excursion to the Valencia beach was the founding meeting of the FAI, formed amongst sunbathers and laughing children.

All of this serves as an important background for both Durruti's character and the war he and his comrades fought. For one, Bookchin argues, "The Anarchist *pistoleros* showed the more militant workers in Barcelona that in a period when the employers seemed to have a completely free hand, a force on their behalf was still alive, effectively answering blow for blow." They

kept hope alive in dark times; without their retaliation, the bosses and the government may have succeeded in crushing the labor movement. And, had the anarchists not been well-armed, accustomed to fighting battles, and risking death, it is unlikely they would have been able to form the militias. This history also explains the reactionary fears of the government, which tried nearly from the beginning to disarm the anarchists, even as they were fighting and dying against its enemy. The government was perfectly aware that the end of the war for the anarchists was the end of the Republic; they fought not for it, but for an egalitarian, collectivized, libertarian[r] society. By the people, Durruti was seen not as a terrorist, but as one of their own revolutionaries, and his engagement in traditional forms of crime as no indictment of his revolutionary fervor, but rather as proof positive.

Barcelona: the city and the city

The city of Barcelona is the other most mythologized hero of the Spanish Civil War, and it has a similarly outrageous history. It was possessed of a double identity: one, the center of government, home to "citizens of good will" and "lovers of order"; the other, the center of rebellion, the "dangerous", "other" city. A center of resistance during the war—and also the site of the street battles between Communists and anarchists during the "May Days" of 1937—Barcelona had a long and profound revolutionary tradition. As far back as 1854, workers marched under the banner "Association or Death", demanding the right to form trade unions. In 1919, while Barcelona was experiencing a major strike and its repression, the newspaper union informed their publishers that they would not publish anything that might work against the strikers. When the government tried to draft the workers as a means of breaking the strike, the newspapers simply did not print the draft notice. In a city in which even the most fundamental means of messaging was controlled by revolutionary workers, the presence of law, order, government, and business was always contingent and troubled. Barcelona fits Manuel Castells' model of the "wild city": uncontrollable, with visible social tensions and violence, dystopian... if only to the eyes of the elite.

Ealham cites Ignasi Terrades in describing Spain as an "absentee state" in Barcelona, its center of government: "an authority structurally incapable of ameliorating the social problems engendered by the urbanisation/industrialisation couplet through the provision of a social wage of collective educational, medical, and welfare services." Moral panics about the uncontrollable poor youth, Ealham says, stemmed from the bosses'

r The word libertarian is used here, and throughout, in the European sense of "partisans of liberty"; it does not refer to American Randians unless so specified.

fear that "future generations of workers would not accept their place in the industrial order." The Church was expected to do something about this, but relied only on the older methods of violence and fear to manage the poor, especially among the children it "educated." Shantytowns, *barracas*, were very common in Barcelona, and were sites of social disorder; as the government became more sophisticated, it tried to replace them with projects, *cases barates*, in an early form of biopolitical management. These were not popular. For the most part, however, the State did not practice the kinds of soft control masquerading as social welfare to which we are now accustomed in poor areas. This fed revolutionary rather than reformist struggle: "...because the experience of the repressive state was undiluted by social welfare initiatives, most workers had little desire for a political campaign to conquer the state—rather, the state was seen as a mortal enemy that had to be crushed."

Barcelona figured prominently in the pre-war era of uprisings, insurrections, labor struggle, and *attentado*—and it developed a generally rebellious culture to go along with these. During the "Tragic Week" of 1909, a time of Catalonian insurrection against troop conscription, Barcelonan workers, *Murcianos* (migrant workers), sex workers, and other *déclassés* threw up barricades and fought the police. Nor was this an exceptional situation; Barcelona's *normative* condition was of generalized proletarian illegality. This included theft and shoplifting, the "small arms fire in the class war." This petty illegality was politicized: "Shopkeepers and shop workers regularly reported that those who seized groceries from shops justified their actions in terms of the recession, that they were unemployed and, through no fault of their own, lacked the economic resources to purchase victuals. Similarly, those who ate without paying in bars and restaurants justified their actions in terms of their 'right to life'."

Unsurprisingly, conflicts between the police and workers, the unemployed, and other marginalized people were common. This, too, was politicized: "The struggle of the unemployed with the police was inseparable from popular traditions of resistance to authority. So great were these traditions that detainees frequently appealed to passers-by to intercede on their behalf. Crowds were often more than happy to oblige, attacking the police and attempting to free detainees whether they knew the arrested person or not." The police of Barcelona were particularly inceffective against collective female resistance to eviction; families' belief that they had a right to live in their homes superseded petty issues like unpaid rent. State violence tended to deepen rather than suppress social rebellion. "Street practices... sealed the working class from the state and its laws and from those entrusted with their

enforcement. ...Anti-police feelings flowed ineluctably from the institutional role of the police as the regulators of social space."

When imprisonment did occur, it was hardly less tolerated. "Soon after the proclamation of the Republic, *cenetistas* [CNT members] marched on the Model Jail to release their comrades; prison records were also destroyed in a very orderly two-hour operation." However, in a foreshadowing of repression to come, the Civil Guard prevented crowds from destroying the records of the political police (*Brigada Policia especializada en Anarquismo y Sindicalismo*.) The women's jail of Barcelona was liberated on the very first day of the anarchist defense of the city against Franco; people hung a red and black flag above it, and posted a sign saying "This torture house was closed by the people, July 1936." The jail was demolished within a month by the decision of *Mujeres Libre*s.

In light of all this struggle and anger, it is not surprising that Barcelona anarchists fought the Civil Guard—putatively their allies against Franco—during the "May Days" there in 1937; even George Orwell was able to make the connection. "Once I had heard how things stood I felt easier in my mind. The issue was clear enough. On one side the C.N.T., on the other side the police. I have no particular love for the idealized 'worker' as he appears in the bourgeois Communist's mind, but when I see an actual flesh-and-blood worker in conflict with his natural enemy, the policeman, I do not have to ask myself which side I am on."[s]

On the rare occasion that Barcelona anarchists were somehow not the group directly under attack, they formed a collaborative relationship of solidarity with those who were. "While the CNT had always recruited workers irrespective of their place of origin, and indeed continued to do so, the radicals channelled the hostility of migrant 'outsiders' to the authorities, and militant *cenetistas* and anarchists defined themselves as 'Murcian' in solidarity with a community under attack... These migrant workers joined CNT protests not because they were alienated or isolated individuals, as was suggested by the authorities. Instead, their protest was firmly located within a supportive network of organized social relations that provided mobilization resources and protection from external threats." While this contrasts with the experiences of some modern migrants who are systematically atomized and isolated by repeated forced dislocations, the rationale backing government

s On the other hand, the Barcelona anarchist militia government established a police force of their own—with patrollers supplied by the CNT, and judges by the FAI! Some mistakes do not need to be repeated.

repression of migrants was the same then as today: "[b]y drawing on racist, social-Darwinist and colonialist discourse, migrants—and occasionally also indigenous workers—were presented as morally inadequate, living in a state of nature or primitive barbarism, the criminal heart of darkness in the city." Especially during the ERC era—when Catalonian nationalists were in the government—Murcians, largely African, were depicted as subhuman and illiterate by the press, responsible for all social problems, especially the impoverishment of Barcelona. The ERC also started issuing an "unemployed worker's card" with one's work history; anyone who did not carry it with them faced the workhouse or repatriation. We continue to be familiar with these attempts to monitor and control the movements of the poor, and to direct their animosity along racial lines, rather than against their common foe; we, the poor, continue to defy them.

The state knew it was necessary to destroy the streets of Barcelona, in which migrants and anarchists comingled every day, in order to control them. Plans were drawn up to "kill the street" by demolishing the Raval (an immigrant neighborhood and center of revolt) and building roads through historic/symbolic plazas, which would be "replaced with major roads, places without history, around which new solidarities would not be possible. In this way the authorities would redefine space and the way it was used and experienced..." This project continues today in many reforming urban spaces; however, Ealham situates this moment in Barcelona historically as a product of European moral panics in reaction to the formation of the working class and modernization in general. The destruction of the streets was "part of a hegemonic project, an ideological offensive through which urban elites sought to strengthen the bourgeois public sphere by limiting working-class access to the streets... this was a language of power that allowed the urban bourgeoisie to define the streets as its own; they delineated the permissible uses of public space, castigating all resistance to the expansion of the capitalist urban order." The enemies of anarchists attempted to control the positive terms of the discussion, most chillingly obvious in the motto of a violent, bourgeois, anti-red paramilitary group, the Sometent militia: "peace, peace, forever peace."

In contrast to the ever-more repressive imaginary of reactionaries and state forces, people report a revolutionary spirit filling the streets of Barcelona during the early days of the war: a temporary opening, a taste of freedom. Clara Thalmann, a Swiss veteran of the Civil War: "In Barcelona the ethos was different from what it had been before—I had known the city back then. Previously, it had been impossible for a woman to venture out into

the street alone... Now women could be seen... sitting in the cafes, chatting, with their rifles across their knees... Women were, all unexpectedly, free. All of a sudden it came to you—they too are showing an interest in all sorts of things." Barcelona even looked anarchist, with hundreds of red and black flags, multi-story anarchist murals, CNT/FAI signs and banners on every flat surface. This was a direct outgrowth of decades of anarchist struggle in the city, not all of which was traditionally conflictual.

Around 75 *ateneus*, social centers for anarchist cultural empowerment, existed in Barcelona between 1877 and 1914. All had libraries and organized social and leisure activities, like hiking. These *ateneus* were the sole source of education in much of Barcelona, especially excluding the Church, and were a formal point of contact between the CNT and the *barris*, which had a symbiotic relationship. Ealham: "For the city's workers, the *barris* were a total social environment: they were spaces of contestation and hope, the starting place for resistance against the bourgeois city." This defies the false dichotomy between positive and negative action the state tried to enforce upon the revolutionaries of Barcelona; while attacks and robberies came out of those neighborhoods, they were not the work of a few bad apples. Rather, "the expropriation squads were deeply rooted in the social formation and were virtually impossible for the police to infiltrate." Anarchists understood that when the State holds the power of veridiction[t], the violence its agents commit is laudable, and the peaceful acts those it governs commit are crimes. As it was put by the leader of the Builders' Union(!): "In a society that legalizes usury and has robbery as its basis, it is logical that there will be some who are prepared to risk their lives and achieve through their own audacity what others manage to do with the protection of coercive state forces."

Just as rural anarchists saw the *pueblo* as the central structure of post-revolutionary society, so urban anarchists saw the *barri*: *cenetistas* envisioned the transformation of the *barris* into collectively-run liberated zones that practiced direct democracy. They were not far from that already, expressing the anarchist value of the means of struggle mimicking the future in which one wishes to live. Collective reciprocity, what Raymond Williams calls the "mutuality of the oppressed", was the fundamental structure of *barri* life; also, it could be withdrawn from those who defied communal norms by committing acts of interpersonal violence like domestic abuse, stealing from one's comrades, or snitching. Even the impact of repression was softened by

t I am most familiar with the term from the section of Foucault's Collège de France lecture series published as *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Most simply, it is the power to create truth, held by those who have the most power in any given encounter or ongoing dynamic.

the *barri*, as it was widely dispersed, which also worked against the "free rider" problem: no one was able to benefit from struggle without contributing to it, and all lived under the risk from its consequences.

Within the *barri*, by Ealham's analysis:

> Consciousness formation was very complex, molecular, and dynamic, whereby individual and collective experiences of the social and spatial orders were accumulated and refined through a process of reflexive engagement. In this way, the practical, sensuous experiences of material realities and the everyday struggle to survive within a determinate space were converted by workers into a series of collective frames of reference. The result was a communal reservoir of class-based experiential knowledge, a refraction of everyday urban practices, the product of the sharp learning curve of everyday oppression and exploitation. [This generated] ...a situated form of local consciousness: a social knowledge of power relations within a specific locale, a vision of the world embedded in a specific time and place, constructed on the ground, from below. In its most elementary form, this sense of class was more emotional than political: it represented a powerful sense of local identity, an *esprit de quartier*, stemming from the extensive bonds of affection generated by the supportive rituals, solidarities, and direct social relationships of neighborhood life. It was in essence a defensive culture, a radical celebration of the local group and the integrity of its lived environment predicated on the assumption that everyday life was constructed in favor of 'them' to the detriment of 'us'.

land and freedom

When one attempts to clearly delineate the time in which a revolutionary spirit prevailed during the war, one is forced to box off small locations and timeframes, few of them congruent with each other. The ways in which social relationships and identities changed during this period were, as Graham puts it, "ultra-contingent, subjective, and fragile." Perhaps most important in this way were the land collectivization projects and village communes far away from urban centers like Barcelona. I am hesitant to describe them here—I think it is better to leave moments of true utopian opening shrouded, so they may not be captured.

But, Dauvé tells us: "...the shock of July '36 gave rise, on the margins of political power, to a social movement whose real expressions, while containing communist potential, were later reabsorbed by the state they

allowed to remain intact. The first month of a revolution already ebbing, but whose extent still concealed its failure, looked like a splintering process: each region, commune, enterprise, collective and municipality escaped the central authority without actually attacking it, and set out to live differently. ...Even the ebb of 1937 did not eradicate the élan of hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants who took over land, factories, neighborhoods, villages, seizing property and socialising production with an autonomy and a solidarity in daily life that struck both observers and participants. Communism is also the re-appropriation of the conditions of existence." This process was far more extensive and heartfelt than the land reforms attempted by the Republic in earlier years; as Dauvé notes later, "What distinguishes reform from revolution is not that revolution is violent, but that it links insurrection and communisation."[u] Whether in the *barri* or on the land project, the political emotion of the moment, as well as its material effect, is central.

In his paper "The Revolutionary Spirit: Hannah Arendt and the Anarchists of the Spanish Civil War", Joel Olson agrees with Dauvé about the central importance of these projects. By his research, "there were up to 1850 collectives covering one-half to three-fourths of the land in Republican Spain." Their governing structures—a melangé of committees, assemblies, and councils—were self-organized, and given real decision-making ability by their participants. Olson sees these structures as the preservation, even genesis, of the revolutionary spirit that Arendt regards with both hope and suspicion. In *On Revolution*, Arendt theorizes that the revolutionary spirit that moves people towards freedom is the same that soon forms the limit of freedom, creating totalitarian governments and repression. Olson contends that the example of these collectives, formed around the economic necessities of daily labor, shows another possibility: that directly democratic governance is possible as a permanent way of life. There were limits to this—formalized committee structure, inherited from the CNT, threatened many collectives with entrenched bureaucracy—but it was fascism that cut this grand experiment short. Until then, Olson says, "[i]t could be said that those who participated in the revolution experienced what Arendt calls 'public happiness', the unique feeling that comes with engagement in the public realm."

At the front—boring, interminable, and desperate—a certain myth of communisation, bravery, and political evolution has nevertheless emerged,

u Dauvé, an anti-statist communist, is here using the term to mean "the process of holding all things in common", rather than an envelopment by the Communist Party.

thanks (for American audiences, at least) largely to Orwell and Hemingway.[v] Orwell:

> ...the prevailing mental atmosphere was that of Socialism. Many of the normal motives of civilized life—snobbishness, money-grubbing, fear of the boss, etc.—had simply ceased to exist. The ordinary class-division of society had disappeared to an extent that is almost unthinkable in the money-tainted air of England; there was no one there except the peasants and ourselves, and no one owned anyone else as his master... However much one cursed at the time, one realized afterward that one had been in contact with something strange and valuable. One had been in a community where hope was more normal than apathy or cynicism, where the word 'comrade' stood for comradeship and not, as in most countries, for humbug. One had breathed the air of equality... the Spanish militias, while they lasted, were a sort of microcosm of a classless society. In that community where no one was on the make, where there was a shortage of everything but no privilege and no boot-licking, one got, perhaps, a crude forecast of what the opening stages of Socialism might be like... The effect was to make my desire to see Socialism established much more actual than it had been before. Partly, perhaps, this was due to the good luck of being among Spaniards, who, with their innate decency and their ever-present Anarchist tinge, would make even the opening stages of Socialism tolerable if they had a chance.

Productive conversation sometimes occurred between the two sides. An international volunteer remembers,

> ...I read this text on the loudspeaker in Italian saying "What are you doing? Why you not just come over? Why are you fighting for Mussolini instead of fighting for Italy, which is on our side?" Something like that. And many of the Italian soldiers after that, they come over to our side. And the Italian artillery begin to shoot above us, aiming over our head. And then we get the order to attack. With the Dombrowski on one side and the Thaelmann on the other, we attack. And we totally put the Italian Fascists to a rout. The Italian Fascists, they keep surrendering, thousands of them. And I laugh. These are the people who are going to build a new Roman Empire.

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v As Hemingway has been largely described as acting like a useless coward by other participants, I have chosen not to quote any of his work around the Civil War.

Serving with that same Thaelmann Battalion later played a role in challenging one international's perception of the confines of national identity as he later interrogated German prisoners in Canada. "I became very prejudiced against the Germans because so many of them [denied knowledge of concentration camps].... They were all anti-Semitic... I had a few jailed, put in isolation. And yet, you know, I remember the Thaelmann Battalion—the best Germans, fantastic Germans, dedicated, honorable, beautiful people who sacrificed their lives so willingly for others, which had suffered the most casualties in Spain. The contradiction was hard for me."

The assessments of Spanish anarchists offered by the foreign volunteers are almost universally positive. Said one, "The anarchists I knew were incredibly courageous. There was one in my outfit... an older man, an old Wobbly. He... was a marvelous human being. He would argue with anybody that was willing to argue with him, which I wasn't, but in his actions he was brave and wonderfully generous and very, very likable." And yet, despite all of these descriptions of laudable heroism, we must be careful to refuse glorifying the revolutionary dead. I doubt they would have wanted it, and if we are to remain true to their values, or carry on their legacy of struggle, we must remember that these arguments behind the lines about politics, the sudden ability of women to relax in Barcelona cafés, the intense amounts of caring labor, shared joy, and endless meetings were no less vital to the revolutionary struggle than their attacks or enagement in traditional warfare. Indeed, it was the deficit in such exercises of freedom, silenced by internal repression and betrayal, that doomed the Spanish anarchists as much as their lack of ammunition.

women's struggle, at the front and behind the lines

> I told no one that I was going off to war. If I had, they would never have allowed me to go. The people I was living with would never have let me go without my father's permission. They would have done all in their power to stop me. And the same was true of the other women. The lorries pulled out a few minutes behind schedule and some of the women would urge the driver: Come, shake a leg! Otherwise my mother may show up and take me by the ears.
>
> —Rosario Sánchez Mora, "the *dinamitera*"

International female volunteers were sidelined to nursing or other care work. Spanish women, too, were largely pressured into doing war work rather than fighting (or sometimes actively organized themselves so), but a few

determinedly escaped to the front, especially in the early days of the war. Women on the front worked incredibly hard to be treated with respect and quality by those around them; as for their "special needs", they endured them in secret. Many of the accounts I read report suffering immensely from the need to keep menstruation secret, and one woman described having a secret abortion on the front. She immediately went back to her duties, and no one knew, although she bled for forty consecutive days.

Mika Etchebéhère became a captain in the POUM. Women made their way to her unit, reasoning that there they stood the best chance of being treated seriously: one, Manolita, said to her, "I am told that in your column the militia women have the same rights as the men, that they need not stick to the dishes or the laundry. I did not come to the front to give it the once over with a cleaning rag in my hand. I've scoured enough dishes already!" Etchebéhère's men admired her, but masculinized her to deal with the situation, proudly claiming, "[we] have a female captain with more balls than all the male captains in the world." She reflected wryly on this: "What am I to them? Neither man nor woman, I suppose, a sort of special breed of hybrid... Their woman, an extraordinary woman, pure and strong, whose sex can be forgiven as long as she does not play on it." All of the other women whose accounts I read report being assigned a similar not-woman, exceptional status at the front. For some, this was actually advantageous on a personal as well as practical level; "Fifi", for example, was a gender rebel from childhood, who refused all traditional female roles and raged when her family tried to prohibit her from acting like a boy. This lifelong experience motivated her politics. She became a Communist at 13 to "invest my struggle with some meaning. I wanted to take on something concrete, the source of all these injustices." When the war broke out, she "went home to pick up her things and say good-bye to her parents. 'Come on, give me a kiss, for I am off to the war...' ...She never got the kisses. At war she was free at last to fight her enemies openly and be treated equally by men—for the most part.[w]

Women's resistance is often undercounted because of the less-obvious support roles women are socially coerced into filling. The women who worked in

w According to her interview with Strobl, she did once have to punch a superior officer from the regular army who accused her of sleeping with the men. All present backed her up, and she was not court-martialed. Later in life, the imprisoned Fifi—who fought so bravely before, during, and after the war—was monitored by the cell of the Communist Party within her prison for suspected lesbian tendencies, and prohibited from spending too much time with any one woman. It is particularly tragic, if unsurprising, that she should be oppressed by the party on the very grounds by which she theorized her particular commitment to struggle: her gender defiance.

factories, fed fighters, did organizational work behind the lines, and later hid those who went underground were, it should go without saying, no less anti-fascist or valuable to that movement than those who fought on the front lines. Many more women worked behind the lines, whether in factories or in more revolutionary roles, than fought on the front. "The collectivization of life in anarchist Barcelona, for instance, was exclusively in the hands of the women." *Mujeres Libres* was a particularly active group of female anarchists; their publications, in traditional anarcha-feminist fashion, attacked the institution of the family, gendered expectations for women, and the expectation that women will perform unpaid labor. While most Communists deprioritized women's struggle until after the war was been won —an indefinite, and as it turns out, permanent deferral—anarchists demanded liberation all at once. Unfortunately, *Mujeres Libres* was also responsible for "political surveillance on behalf of control patrols" in Barcelona—an incredibly distressing role for an anarchist group to play—and became embroiled in political infighting. *Mujeres Antifascistas*, a Communist women's group, meanwhile focused on glorifying the importance of motherhood in producing and caring for the troops—a reactionary perspective on the role of women in struggle, one often shared by fascists. When *Mujeres Antifascistas* attempted to envelop *Mujeres Libres* in an umbrella women's popular front organization, the latter emphatically refused, able to see it as part of the general trend of Communist enclosure and defanging of anarchist struggle.

This internal strife was, of course, outmatched by the workings of the patriarchy. Lucia Sánchez Saornil, a founder and chief editor of the *Mujeres Libres journal*: "There are many male comrades who honestly desire to see women collaborating in the struggle. But this wish is not matched by a fresh outlook on woman. The comrades want her to collaborate so as to help encompass victory all that much more easily, at a strategic moment so to speak, but without sparing a single moment's thought for the autonomy of women and without for a moment ceasing to look upon themselves as the center of the universe." It is only possible to deprioritize these critiques if one is, or is allied with, their object; and to do so is actually counterrevolutionary as well as uncomradely. Rosario Sánchez Mora, *la dinamitera*, on the whispers that women at the front were all prostitutes: "That's nonsense! On the front we were all militians, people of left-wing ideology and unbelievable ideals for which we were ready to die. I was sixteen when I went to the front. I went there a virgin and returned a virgin. All this is just fascist propaganda designed to insult and blacken the women! In the trenches the fascists used to call out to us: 'Cowards! Do you have to bring your womenfolk along because, by yourselves, you just can't hack it?'" The insecurities the fascists

spoke to, the utilitarian nature of male support for women's liberation, and the call for women to deprioritize their own liberation all went hand in hand as a force of internal repression.

the internationals[x]

40-60,000 internationals came to fight in Spain; around 5,000 of these came from the US and Canada. Only 2,300 of these 5,000 survived. Those coming from the US were largely immigrants, or children of immigrants, most of whom had a radical political orientation in their countries of origin.[y] They frequently came out of labor struggle. One participant said, after being arrested for labor organizing, "I realized there was an 'us' and there was a 'them' in America, as well as anywhere else. So when I heard, shortly after the big strike in Detroit, that the 'them' and 'us' were at it with guns in Spain, in what I thought would be the beginning of the final showdown, I decided to go." Another was even more explicit in his desire for conflict: "I remember telling the woman I was living with that it was finally a chance to be up against a cop on the picket line armed the way he was—you know, gun against gun." These volunteers were commonly politicized by the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti, or by seeing or experiencing racist violence.[z] Many of those who went to fight in Spain were members of the Young Communist League, the only group openly organizing volunteers to go over, as the Palmer Raids and resulting deportations had decimated the American anarchist movement by this time.

Many volunteered simply because they were young, impulsive, and had nothing to lose. Said one, "I didn't really have political views, but I remember talking about what was happening in Spain and listening and the next thing I knew I wanted to volunteer. I told my mother and she told me to go talk to my father who was in the country hunting ducks. But I said 'I do not have time. The boat is leaving,' and that night I left..." Some volunteers went on to have appropriately youthful adventures in Spain; one reports going on a one-day leave, running into Hemingway and getting drunk with him, and waking up with the realization that he had overstayed his leave. Desperate to get back

x Unless otherwise noted, I only refer to the accounts of US and Canadian international volunteers here, as published by Gerassi.

y One, John Paddy McElligott, serves as a particularly intense example. He saw his father murdered by the Irish army for his participation in the IRA. McElligott promptly joined the IRA himself, at the age of 13; after escaping from prison, where he had been put for violent IRA activity, he drifted around England, sucker-punching random Englishmen. Eventually he ended up in Canada, from where he volunteered to go to Spain.

z "150 black U.S. citizens were lynched between 1929 and 1933." The Scottsboro trial also occurred around this time, and Communists were a large part of working for the eventually-successful appeal.

to his column before anyone noticed his absence, he and another volunteer simply stole the US ambassador's limousine and drove it to the front.

For others, volunteering was a gesture of commitment to fighting for a better world. "I think going to Spain was like going to the [American] South for politically conscious kids in the 1960s." For most, that gesture remained a worthwhile action. "We fought in Spain because it would benefit ordinary human beings everywhere. For all the errors, dogmas, harshness, petty or grand betrayals, the war in Spain was truly a war between right and wrong, between the exploited and the exploiters, between democrats and fascists. And while there were some terrible leaders and some cowardly individuals on our side, by and large it was certainly the most beautiful expression of the commitment to humanity by ordinary humans that I have ever read about or experienced." For many of these volunteers, internationalism was not only a closely held value, but a necessary outgrowth of their material experiences—citizenship, migration, and enfranchisement were beginning to be frequently contested things, especially for those with revolutionary politics.

Jewish volunteers formed a quarter of the international brigades that fought for the Republicans. There was an entire Jewish company, the Botwin Company, formed within the Polish battalion but with international membership; it was named after a Jewish communist killed in Poland in 1934. "[I]ts flag bore the words 'for your freedom and ours'" in Yiddish and Polish on one side and in Spanish on the other, and members of the Botwin Company would later fight in the French Resistance." However, to paraphrase Albert Prago (a Jewish veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade), their Jewish identity took a sideline to their internationalism, humanism, antifascism, and communism.[aa]

Black Americans participated in the war on terms previously unavailable to them. '"The Abraham Lincoln Brigade, in which around 90 African Americans

aa "Thus, while most of the volunteers who were Jewish may well have been nonreligious and assimilationists and did not go to Spain, as ALB veteran Alvah Bessie has said, 'out of my Jewish "nature" or "personality" or "unconscious" but to fight fascism, and specifically Nazi-fascism', it is probable that being Jewish helped create that desire to fight Nazi-fascism. After all, even the most antireligious and assimilated Jew is made to feel Jewish by the anti-Semite. As Jean-Paul Sartre once said, the Jew is he who is defined as a Jew by his society. And if a society sponsors pogroms, all Jews will inevitably hate such attackers, even the Jews who only heard or read about the attacks from relative and distant safety. Repression may cause fear, even cowardice, but it also creates consciousness." (Gerassi)

fought, was the first non-segregated American military unit ever to exist – the United States Army itself continuing to operate segregation throughout the Second World War." One black nurse from the US who served with the Republicans in Spain, Salaria Kea O'Reilly, went, of all reasons, because she was a Catholic. "I always read about nuns working in poor places, taking care of the poor, and I always wanted to help the nuns as a nurse in this kind of work. I assumed that there would be nuns helping the poor in the Spanish Civil War, on the side of those who were defending democracy." Of course, she was disappointed in that expectation—although when she was captured by fascists and awaited execution, a nun smuggled her to freedom because of their shared faith. Later in life, she reflected that her experience in Republican Spain was the only time in her life when she was treated with respect and dignity by the white people around her. When she returned to the United States, she faced segregation in the Army, decades-long harassment by the authorities, and even, late in life, persecution from the KKK for her interracial marriage and membership in an otherwise white church. For her, even the bullets of the fascists did not compare to living under white supremacy in the United States.

When the Republic decreed that the international fighters must leave Spain,

> Women threw flowers and wept, and all the Spanish people thanked them... The Internationals looked very dirty and weary and young and many of them had no country to go back to. The German and Italian anti-fascists were already refugees; the Hungarians had no home either. Leaving Spain, for most of the European volunteers, was to go into exile.

III. Collaboration: 'a fatal logic'

"When all this began the state was a phantom, to which no one paid attention."
—the War Committee of the Iron Column

Unfortunately, according to Graham, "The Spanish Left had never developed an anticolonialist discourse... Indeed, Republican attitudes to Franco's North African soldiers, whom they understandably feared, were scarcely less racist than those of the rebels themselves." This fear was based not only on the immediate situation, but on a long legacy of violent animosity. Bookchin quotes Brenan on the significance of Franco's pre-war deployment of Moroccan troops against the Asturias uprising: "For eight hundred years the crusade against the Moors has been the central theme of Spanish history: they still continued to be the hereditary enemy—the only enemy, in fact, against which the Spanish army had ever fought." This view of Moroccans proved a direct disadvantage to the Republic's tactics. According to Kern, "The CNT/FAI promised to abandon all Spanish territory in Morocco if Berber soldiers in General Franco's army could somehow be lured away" —but no concrete action was ever taken.[ab] Dauvé suggests why: "...the announcement of immediate and unconditional independence for Spanish Morocco would, at minimum, have stirred up trouble among the shock troops of reaction. The Republic obviously gave short shrift to this solution, under a combined pressure from conservative milieus and from the democracies of England and France, which had little enthusiasm for the possible break-up of their own empires." From a tactical perspective as well as the ethical, this is too bad: if Franco had been faced with revolt from his back, things might have been different. I don't know anything about Moroccan attitudes of the time, but I know that people generally resent being conscripted by their occupier, and several historians make the point that Franco's troop supply might have been diminished by some expression of solidarity from Spanish radicals. I think Spanish attitudes about "the Moors" played a major role in this failure, though Orwell agrees with Dauvé that the French would not have appreciated a liberated Spanish Morocco... so "the best strategic opportunity of the war was flung away in the vain hope of placating French and British capitalism." That analysis rings true, as it proved to be a dominant theme of events to follow.

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ab Kern 165. I have not seen this promise referred to elsewhere, and Graham implies that no such effort was made, merely talked about. Kern cites "Pages in Working Class History", *Spain and the World*, August 26, 1938, p. 3.

The initial, small, very justifiable, anarchist collaboration with the government—voting in the 1936 election, in hopes of freeing their comrades—marked the beginning of a disastrous trajectory. One might well say that an unsuccessful revolutionary gesture that leaves thousands in prison is a disastrous trajectory itself—and some have, even describing the Asturias rebellion as counterrevolutionary.[ac] However, Asturias also caused the opposite effect: following its suppression, according to Kern, "...the socialists and communists were filled with the same kind of anger that had once motivated the CNT and the FAI. Other sections of the Spanish Left began behaving as if they too were anarchists." There is nothing in the anarchist philosophy that marks imprisonment as a failure, after all. Collaboration with the government, on the other hand, is highly suspect—and anarchists, than and now, have argued about whether this move towards government involvement and working closely with statist Communists, socialists, and Republicans doomed the anarchist effort in Spain. "Even Buenaventura Durruti gave participation in the elections a lukewarm endorsement after the Popular Front promised to free all political prisoners. 'We face a situation which could quickly turn into a revolution or a civil war... The worker who votes and then quietly returns home will be a counterrevolutionary; so will the worker who does not but nonetheless refuses to fight.'"

As Barcelona anarchists fought off the initial fascist assault, they met with the Catalan government to form a revolutionary committee that would participate in running the country. In a bizarre yet sensible twist, members of *Nosotros*, the militant FAI affinity group, became the informal committee running the militia; some CNT-FAI members became government employees. In November, four anarchist ministers were admitted to the national government, though this act ran contrary to the Republican desire to present an acceptable image to not only France and Britain, but even to the USSR —anarchists were *personas non grata* everywhere. The CNT incorporation into the government also outraged many anarchists, especially those at the front. The Iron Column sent out a communiqué of grave condemnation: "Over the wire comes news... that the CNT is going to join the government. Thus, it is embracing what it has always attacked, thereby destroying the basis of our ideas. From now on there will be no more talk of liberty, but rather submission to 'our government'... History moves on, the state survives, and all in the name of an organisation that professes to be libertarian. For how much longer, comrades?"

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ac This was the word used by a *treintista*, one of the CNT dissenters from FAI radicalism.

Abel Paz[ad] looks back on the moment:

> Having right on one's side was not enough to stop the advance of the counterrevolution. One needed the determination to tear it up from the roots once and for all, and this was precisely what was not done. There was a desire for discussion, as if chatting with a friend who was defending the same interests. But this was not the case, because the component parts of the counterrevolutionary onslaught was cut from the same cloth as those beyond the front lines whose ideology was plainly fascist... The revolution lacked the strength needed in order to arrive at its ultimate conclusion. And because of this deficiency, everything that happened during the month of November had a fatal logic, although it would take a lot of intense pain before the serious error that had been committed was finally understood.

Some anarchists who joined the government pushed through at least incidentally helpful policies. Frederica Montseny, who previously identified as a nihilist individualist anarchist[ae] but was now serving as the Minister of Health, managed to decriminalize abortion: an epic feat anywhere in 1936, but particularly remarkable in traditional, Catholic Spain. However, the American anarcchist Emma Goldman, previously on friendly terms with her, came to distrust her over her time in Spain. In 1936, she wrote Rudolf Rocker: "I have seen and talked to Frederica Montseny. She is the 'Lenin' in skirts. She is idolized here. She is capable and brilliant but I am afraid she has something of the politician in her." In a letter to Rocker six months later, Goldman is harsher: "...Only blind zealotry will deny that [Montseny] is the most willing to compromise. I hope you understand, dear Rudolf, that I have no personal reason to say that Frederica has gone further to the Right than any of the leading CNT-FAI members. Not only that but she is as dogmatic against any critical expression on the part of comrades in the FAI as anyone else." As she became aware of Montseny's role in trying to get anarchists to disarm in the midst of the 1937 May clashes in Barcelona, Goldman drove the final nail into her assessment:

> I hold Frederica Montseny, Garciá Oliver [Durruti's former comrade] and several other of the leading comrades responsible for the gains made by the Communists and for the danger now threatening the Spanish

ad Paz was a 15-year-old anarchist at the time of the war. After living in exile for a time, he returned to fight Franco from the underground; he served 11 years in prison for this effort. He later became one of the primary historians of the Spanish Civil War.

ae Montseny wrote largely as an essentialist feminist, and argued that women could find liberation through Nietzschean "overcoming" and engagement in the arts.

> Revolution and the CNT-FAI. My very first interview with these new comrades has shown me that they are on the 'border-line' of reformism. I had never met Oliver before, but I had met Frederica in 1929. The change, since the Revolution swept her forward to the highest topnotch as leader, was only too apparent. I was strengthened in that impression every time I talked to her about the compromise she and the others had made. It was too obvious to me that these comrades are working into the hands of the Soviet government. That in showing their gratitude to Stalin and his regime... dire results were sure to follow. Incidentally, it also meant the betrayal of our comrades in the concentration camps and prisons of Russia. I never saw a greater breach of faith with Anarchist principles than the joint 'love-fest' of the CNT-FAI with the Russian satraps in Barcelona... I have not written about this to anyone, dear comrade, although I felt indignation and could have cried out my contempt of the so-called leaders of the CNT-FAI.

Montseny, for her part, proudly claimed her political compromise, saying: "Although it had been our aim, to attempt a total conquest would have meant a broken front, and consequently, failure. The fact is that we [anarchists] were the first to modify our aspirations, the first to understand that the struggle against international fascism was in itself great enough." Goldman could not disagree enough with how Montseny viewed the ethical and tactical aspects of her decision to collaborate. In a letter she sent to Rocker a few days later, Goldman despairingly wrote: "You will see that the murderous Stalin gang have killed Berneri and another comrade and that they were back of the attempt to disarm the comrades of the CNT-FAI. Still more terrible to me is that Oliver and Montseny have called a retreat and have denounced the militant Anarchists, to whom the revolution still means something, as counter-revolutionists. In other words, it is a repetition of Russia with the identical method of Lenin against the Anarchists and S.R.s [Socialist Revolutionaries] who refused to barter the revolution for the Brest-Litovsk Peace." Goldman withheld these criticisms from the public to avoid undermining the war, which later caused her to be unfairly understood as a "collaborationist with the collaborationists" by other anarchists. In fact, she was among the best-equipped to understand the mistake the Spanish anarchists were making, having previously written *My Disillusionment in Russia* in an attempt to explain to the international anarchist population that the Soviet revolution had taken a dark turn. Unfortunately, the things she described were still not widely known outside the USSR for many years, and her warnings were not taken seriously by more than a few anarchists who had also experienced Communist betrayal—such as, later, the survivors of the Spanish Civil War.

In May 1937, the Republican government moved to suppress POUM, which it labeled a Trotskyist organization,[af] and the anarchists. The USSR viewed both political tendencies as its enemies, and the government, primarily Communist at this point, was bent on a path of permanent appeasement of this cantankerous ally. It therefore accused POUM of being not just Trotskyists... but fascist agents. And, on April 25th, the Republicans seized control of an anarchist-held outpost, killing four. People on both sides began caching weapons in preparation for greater conflict; contrariwise, all agreed to hold no events on May Day, a traditional day of anarchist, socialist, and Communist demonstration, for fear of serious fighting breaking out. It did anyway, a few days later in Barcelona, in the ironically termed "May Days."

George Orwell happened to be in Barcelona at the time, on holiday from the front, and wrote a vivid description of the fighting, in which he participated—a sort of horrible, interminable standoff. Despite the fear-mongering government claims that anarchists had stockpiled massive quantities of weapons away from the front, it was the government police who were the better-equipped for this battle. Somehow, *their* weapons had not all been sent up to the desperately under-provisioned front. Orwell says, "The Civil Guards and Carabineros, who were not intended for the front at all, were better armed and far better clad than ourselves. I suspect it is the same in all wars—always the same contrast between the sleek police in the rear and the ragged soldiers in the front." This is for exactly the reason demonstrated by the "May Days" themselves—to police one's own population is of greater interest to those in power than to protect it. The head of a Socialist party, the PSUC, is even reported to have said: "Before taking Zaragoza [a city under fascist control], we have to take Barcelona." The police had their own tradition of fighting Leftists, and could hardly be expected to do other than to fulfill their role; Orwell notes, "on several occasions later in the war, e.g. at Santander, the local Civil Guards went over to the Fascists in a body." A column marching on Teruel that was composed of one-fourth militians and three-fourths Civil Guards, as also betrayed to the fascists by the police within their own militia—they went to sleep as comrades, but the workers awoke to guns pointed in their faces.

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af As Orwell trenchantly observes, "This implied that scores of thousands of working-class people, including eight or ten thousand soldiers who were freezing in the front-line trenches and hundreds of foreigners who had come to Spain to fight against Fascism, often sacrificing their livelihood and their nationality to do so, were simply traitors in the pay of the enemy." (Orwell 64) Both Orwell and his comrades from the front were included in this accusation, though Orwell never actually joined the POUM—"for which afterward, when the POUM was suppressed, I was rather sorry", he says, in a tender display of solidarity.

By Orwell's analysis, the workers who fought the Republican police in the "May Days" were right to do so. "A year after the outbreak of war the Catalan workers had lost much of their power, but their position was still comparatively favorable. It might have been much less so if they had made it clear that they would lie down under no matter what provocation. There are occasions when it pays better to fight and be beaten than not to fight at all." And, in fact, the attacks of the government during that time affected the urban poor as a whole, not simply those shooting back—by disassembling the CNT food supply committees and reintroducing the free market, they effectively starved anyone short on money, as inflation skyrocketed.

Orwell's book, though it covers all of his experiences in Spain, from his time at the front to escaping further Republican repression, is centered around the betrayal of the anarchists and POUM by the Communist government. Orwell, himself a Socialist, was shocked, disgusted, and horrified by the "May Days", the events that followed them, and what he came to understand their motives to have been; he developed a lifelong hatred of Communists.[ag] *Homage to Catalonia*, written only five months after he left Spain, was a desperate attempt at producing embattled mythology in the face of near-certain defeat. Orwell was attempting to tell the truth he had seen i as an act of solidarity, in a way that might be materially beneficial for the comrades he left behind. Unfortunately for him, the book sold only 1,500 copies during the first, most relevant years; people were not interested in hearing his critique.

The "May Days" were very nearly the end. On June 15th the POUM was declared illegal; its leadership were jailed, followed by thousands more in short order. Orwell, who faced possible imprisonment or death for his service in POUM—even though he was a wounded international vet—escaped with his wife across the border; many were not so lucky. Just before he left, he went to visit a friend from the front who had been thrown in jail; even there, in a moment I find heartbreaking, he saw *"¡Viva la Revolucíon!"* painted on the cell wall.

Militarization was another step in the destruction of the revolution, although it was justified by the government as a way to "free anarchist energies for the war in Aragon." Perhaps it is most useful to think through militarization—the process by which the militias were regularized into army units, with their

ag This hatred, common among Spanish Civil War vets, metastasized in Orwell; years later, he gave information on British citizens he suspected of being Communists to the British government. Though he did not do this with the purpose of calling repression down on them, it was a wholly irresponsible act in that era of Red-baiting. (See various essays on "Orwell's List.")

most radical elements sieved out—via the perspective of those who had been incarcerated by the Republic, but had been fighting alongside it since nonetheless.

The Iron Column was one of the most famous of anarchist militias; as their opening move on the way to the front, they liberated the San Miguel de los Reyes prison and incorporated a large number of the freed prisoners into their ranks, as many as wished to join. A participant describes the action:

> The opening of the gates and the releasing of all the inmates was the doing of a small group of comrades. They arrived at the prison and demanded that the gates be thrown open. There was no resistance, so they set everybody free. Most of the inmates were in San Miguel de los Reyes for criminal offences but there was also the odd comrade convicted for bank robbery or something like that. The opening up of the prison was prompted by principle and nothing more. It was an attempt to do away with something we regarded as a product of bourgeois rule: the inmates were victims of society and they had to be given a chance, at which point most of them joined the Iron Column, fighting and conducting themselves in an extraordinarily brave and intrepid fashion.

This prison liberation is a rather beautiful example[ah] of how the revolutionary spirit of the militias both acted beyond the necessities of war—and, incidentally, supported them in conducting that war. In contrast to the Column's view and treatment of these prisoners, the police in the town in which the Column massed who did not want to join the Column were disarmed and left under close supervision. The Column had learned from its lesson in Teruel that police do not transform easily into revoluytionaries, unlike criminals.

The government announced that the Iron Column would be militarized on April 1st; at its general assembly in mid-March, the Iron Column debated whether it would comply. Paz quotes this debate at length, and it is certainly worth reading in its entirety. I will quote a few highlights:

> "We cannot isolate ourselves by dealing only with the war. We must also spare a thought for the revolution. They want to blind us with cries of 'Everything for Madrid! Everything for the children!' There are two

ah The essay "Testimony of an 'Uncontrollable' from the Iron Column", reprinted by Paz, and reprinted by others as "A Day Mournful and Overcast", is a poetic firsthand account by one of those liberated from prison who joined the Column. Although I do not quote it here, it is well worth reading.

capitalisms that intend to crush the revolutionary moment: a domestic capitalism represented by the power of the Generalitat, and a foreign capitalism represented by England, America, in France..."

"I will speak not as an antifascist but as an anarchist. I oppose all authority, especially military authority."

"I am not a *miliciano*, but I have been to Russia, where I experienced the revolution and was able to observe the way in which the anarchists were liquidated (at this point the comrade summarised the Makhnovist movement.) ...What counts is to maintain the spirit of anarchism and, equally, to try to find the resources that will give us strength."

Even these few excerpts demonstrate the depth of political understanding, the tactical orientation, and the knowledge of those participating on the front lines of the war. The concerns voiced by Goldman, Orwell, and many other famous outsiders were not limited to that privileged few, but were generally understood. Despite this, the bulk of anarchists at the assembly agreed that greater discipline and reorganization was needed. By the end of the assembly, the Column consented to militarization.

Earlier, Durruti spoke on the issue of militarization in a speech he delivered just two weeks before his death, on November 4th of 1936:

The militarisation of the militias has been decreed. If this has been done to frighten us, to impose on us an iron discipline, this is a mistaken policy. We challenge those who have issued this decree to come to the front and see for themselves our moral [sic] and our discipline and compare it with the moral and the discipline in the rear. We will not accept dictated discipline. We are doing our duty. Come to the front to see our organisation! Later we shall come to Barcelona to examine your discipline, your organisation and your control!

Orwell had a similar assessment of the militias:

The essential point of the system was social equality between officers and men. Everyone from general to private drew the same pay, ate the same food, wore the same clothes, and mingled on terms of complete equality. If you wanted to slap the general commanding the division on the back and ask him for a cigarette, you could do so, and no one thought it curious... Later it became the fashion to decry the militias, and

> therefore to pretend that the faults which were due to lack of training and weapons were the result of the equalitarian system. Actually, a newly raised draft of militia was an undisciplined mob not because the officers called the privates 'Comrade' but because raw troops are always an undisciplined mob. In practice the democratic 'revolutionary' type of discipline is more reliable than might be expected. In a workers' army discipline is theoretically voluntary. It is based on class-loyalty, whereas the discipline of a bourgeois conscript army is based ultimately on fear... When a man refused to obey an order you did not immediately get him punished; you first appealed to him in the name of comradeship. Cynical people with no experience of handling men will say instantly that this would never 'work', but as a matter of fact it does 'work' in the long run.

Militarization included a decree prohibiting women from serving in the front lines. "Female militia members were fetched from the trenches, many of them weeping with anger as they were forced to board the buses that would carry them back into the rearguard." But, Strobl tells us, anarchist units somewhat ignored the ban. Paz gives us closer insight into this particular with an excerpt from the minutes of the Iron Column assembly on militarization:

> Falomir asks that women not be admitted to the newly organised Column, on the grounds that they are a source of disturbance and only there to look for a man.
>
> After unanimous objection from the assembly, these remarks are retracted.
>
> Comrade Pellicer clears up the situation of the female comrades by saying that any woman who wants to can come along as a *miliciana*, as long as she brings her rifle.

The true meaning of this dismissive response is highlighted by a personal account: "I was present at the assembly that was eventually held, at which militarisation was agreed to. I saw opposition come from many comrades, even from some female comrades who had earlier—according to some comrades—shown such bravery by leading the way into battle. I saw women who wept from anger and fury upon being told that they would no longer be able to continue fighting with the Brigade, nor on any other front." Women fighters understood that they had lost their personal battle, that provisional tolerance was not the same as support.

Dauvé: "From the battle for Madrid (March '37) to the final fall of Catalonia (February '39), the cadaver of the aborted revolution decomposed on the battlefield. One can speak of war in Spain, not of revolution." Only a few more betrayals and bad decisions remained before the end. Negrín withdrew the internationals from the front in 1938 to prove that the Spanish military was not controlled by Soviet Communists, in hopes of persuading the Allies to aid Spain. After the departure of their comrades from abroad, there was no hope for the remaining revolutionaries—nor for their betrayers. Franco formally defeated the Republic on April 1st, 1939.

One could trace a path from anarchist voting—recognition of the government, however cynically motivated—to the collaboration between the anarchist militias and the government in the war; from that to the dissolution of the militias/militarization; to the depiction of POUM as a force of fascist provocateurs, and the suppression of the anarchists and POUM in the Barcelona "May Days"; to the following imprisonment of countless anarchists and other Leftists who did not meet with the approval of the USSR, who had by then become the government's only hope; to the mass incarceration, torture, and persecution of any suspected of disloyalty under Franco. I have no desire, however, to locate an original sin for the Spanish anarchists, or indeed to blame these brave people at all for the way in which they were betrayed. Perhaps it would have been a betrayal of common sense, if more politically pure, to refuse to vote in a government that might release your comrades. And supporting the state, recognizing its authority in your life, is far larger and more diffuse than voting or holding office. Dauvé:

> No less than Marxism, anarchism fetishizes the state and imagines it as being incarnated in a place. ...the CNT declared the Spanish state to be a phantom relative to the tangible reality of the "social organizations" (i.e. militias, unions.) But the existence of the state, its *raison d'être*, is to paper over the shortcomings of 'civil' society by a system of relations, of links, of a concentration of forces, an administrative, police, judicial, and military network which goes 'on hold' as a backup in times of crisis, awaiting the moment when a police investigator can go sniffing in the files of the social worker. The revolution has no Bastille, police station or governor's mansion to 'take': its task is to render harmless or destroy everything from which such places draw their substances.

In this perceptive and important essay, "When Insurrections Die"[ai], Dauvé argues that the basic problem of anti-fascism is that it forces the revolutionary to fight *for* the capitalist state, *against* a projected worst version of the same capitalist state. "...[A]s fascism is capital in its most reactionary forms, such a vision means trying to promote capital in its most modern, non-feudal, non-militarist, non-racist, non-repressive, non-reactionary forms, i.e. a more liberal capitalism, in other words a more capitalist capitalism." From this perspective, the Spanish anarchists had almost failed from the moment they began fighting Franco instead of the Republic, as "an undeniable class war was transformed into a capitalist civil war... We won't invite ridicule by accusing the left and far left of having discarded a communist perspective which they knew in reality only when opposing it. It is all too obvious that anti-fascism renounces revolution. But anti-fascism fails exactly where its realism claims to be effective: in preventing a possible dictatorial mutation of society. ...Fascism is the adulation of the statist monster, while anti-fascism is its more subtle apology. The fight for a democratic state is inevitably a fight to consolidate the state, and far from crippling totalitarianism, such a fight increases totalitarianism's stranglehold on society."

Dauvé approvingly cites the ways in which the Durruti Column paused to encourage collectivization of land and people's tribunals on their way to the front. When the radicals traded some of their autonomy for government support, he says, they believed they would be able to control the situation by virtue of being armed; but "[t]his was a fatal error. The question is not: who has the guns? But rather: what do the people with guns do? 10,000 or 100,000 proletarians armed to the teeth are nothing if they place their trust in anything besides their own power to change the world. Otherwise, the next day, the next month or the next year, the power whose authority they recognize will take away the guns which they failed to use against it." The power of the proletariat is not strictly one of firepower, either:

> The question is not whether the proles finally decide to break into the armories, but whether they unleash what they are: commodified beings who no longer can and who no longer want to exist as commodities, and whose revolt explodes capitalist logic. Barricades and machine guns flow from this "weapon." The greater the change in social life, the less guns will be needed, and the less casualties there will be. A communist

ai I read this essay as it was reprinted in *Endnotes* Vol. 1, where it serves as a basis for debate between Dauvé and Theorie Communiste about the relative importance of interrogating past history in terms of what could have been done differently, in contrast to a historically determinist reading: what was done is what was necessarily done because of material and theoretical constraints. Without seriously taking up that argument, I will say that my sympathies on this matter lie with Dauvé.

> revolution will never resemble a slaughter: not from any nonviolent principle, but because revolution subverts more (soldiers included) than it actually destroys.

Helen Graham argues that, from the perspective of the Socialists running the Republic, both the "May Days" in Barcelona 1937 and the Socialist Largo Caballero's fall from Republican power must be seen as "the liquidations of the vestiges of revolutionary power by the political representatives of the central state... Largo had performed a crucial task in the supremely difficult initial phase of the war. He had salvaged the structure of the bourgeois Republic and it was this, significantly strengthened, which swept him away." Similarly, the Munich Pact of 1938 (in which the major powers of Europe allowed Hitler to annex portions of Czechoslovakia) marked a point, she argues, in which "not only Czechoslovakia but the Spanish Republic was sacrificed on the altar of appeasement." As revolutionary elements within Spain were sacrificed to please the USSR, so revolutionary Spain itself was abandoned by the USSR in hopes of placating Hitler; the betrayer was betrayed. The final moments of the Republic, ended by one last military coup, signifies to Graham "the convergence of diametrically-opposed political and social interests against a Communist Party which, while it had alienated anarchists and some socialists by its protagonism in the destruction of popular revolution in the interests of Popular Front, had equally alienated its middle-class power base by 'failing' to deliver the military victory on which the political commitment of the bourgeoisie had ultimately always depended."

Some, like George Orwell, have argued that letting go of revolutionary goals undermined not just anarchist struggle but the war effort in general, pointing out that a call to the international working class to join Spain in rising up against capitalism, the state, and the particular form of it called fascism might have generated a far more enthusiastic and widespread response than the prevailing idea of setting aside revolutionary goals in favor of prioritizing the war against the fascists.[aj] However, this may also have been unsuccessful.

aj Orwell: "...once the war had been narrowed down to a 'war for democracy' it became impossible to make any large-scale appeal for working-class aid abroad. If we face facts we must admit that the working class of the world has regarded the Spanish war with detachment. Tens of thousands of individuals came to fight, but the tens of millions behind them remained apathetic....For years past the Communists themselves had been teaching the militant workers in all countries that 'democracy' was a polite name for capitalism. To say first 'Democracy is a swindle,' and then 'Fight for democracy!' is not good tactics. If, with the huge prestige of Soviet Russia behind them, they had appealed to the workers of the world in the name not of 'democratic Spain', but of 'revolutionary Spain', it is hard to believe that they would not have got a response."

The International Brigades were organized primarily by Communists; the Socialists and anarchists of Europe and the U.S. had largely opposed participation in WWI, and for some this anti-militarism had turned into a sort of undefined pacifism, which inclined them against participating in the Spanish struggle. Others who might have come had already been decimated by repression. Although things would certainly have been different with a wider outreach effort, especially one that framed the struggle in terms of solidarity along class lines, the inertia of much of the international Left may have prevented the outcome Orwell envisions.

In a best-case scenario—if no anarchist had ever worked with the Spanish government, if more workers had come from around the world, if Franco had been defeated—could a revolution have been sustained in Spain? This is doubtful, partly for reasons of internal unreadiness, but more largely because of international issues. The United States, England, and France were all afraid of the USSR, and of the implications of its Communist revolution. They feared similar uprisings within their own borders, and they emphatically did not want a revolutionary Spain, no matter what its exact political alignment. The revolution was possibly doomed as the anarchists who fought for it were—from all sides. I find their struggle of no less value for its tragic denouement.

consequences

> We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth; there is not the slightest doubt about it. The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world here in our hearts. That world is growing this minute.
>
> —Buenaventura Durruti

The Spanish Civil War was a testing ground for World War II. As Hochschild observed, many of the German weapons deployed in the war were first used in Spain, by Franco's Nazi allies. And, Graham tells us, Spanish resistance to fascism—the putting-down of which partially occupied Hitler and Mussolini, and prevented Franco from possible participation in other conflicts or acts of imperialism—gave England time to re-arm, to prepare for WWII. Had the people of Spain not risen up against fascism, in such numbers and with such vigor, the oncoming world war might have had a different outcome. Without the radicalizing struggle of anarchists and other Leftists for the preceding sixty years in Spain, there would not have been such resistance, as there was not in other countries in which facism reared its head.

People fight fascism to the extent to which they understand their own lives and freedom to be threatened by it. In the case of its immediate victims, the need for struggle is clear—which in no way diminishes the valor of their resistance. For those whose politics tell them that a threat to the freedom of any is a threat to the freedom of all, fighting fascism and its allies is a permanent necessity.

For the survivors of the war, this necessity brought a huge amount of suffering. Thousands of adults were also incarcerated, often tortured; about 10,000 were interned in Nazi concentration camps, most in Mauthausen, where they bore the red triangle of active anti-fascist resisters.[ak] Many who endured this dread fate nevertheless entered the underground resistance upon their release or escape.[al] As well as from within Spain, some fought from exile in the USSR, or from within northern Africa; many fought with the fascinating MOI and the Maquis in France. A Spanish Republican unit was even given the dangerous honor of vanguard position in the liberation of Paris... but still did not receive the Allied support which they earnestly hoped would help them retake their country. A few returning Spanish Civil War vets who enlisted in the U.S. Army were sent behind enemy lines to do dangerous sabotage—"the only kind of active service for which the American government did not actively discriminate against those of its citizens who had fought for the Spanish Republic", Graham notes with pain.

Within Spain, a dense atmosphere of enforced denunciation and fearful silence descended, and is only now, many years after Franco's death, beginning to fully lift. Graham describes the "penal universe" Franco imposed, both upon the hundreds of thousands he formally incarcerated, and those who lived in the permanent state of exception "outside" of prison walls. 50,000 Republican children were taken from their families and institutionalized, or placed with fascist families. By virtue of being defeated, the Republic had

ak Poetically, Hitler called his program against these "*nacht und nebel*"—usually translated as "under cover of night", but, literally, "Night and Fog", into which the anti-fascists had disappeared. It is a Wagner reference.

al Strobl: "In most instances, those of [the Republican women fighters] who were taken prisoner by the enemy during battle were brutally raped and then murdered. Some of them were lucky and were hauled off to prison; those who were even luckier regained their freedom after six, seven, or ten years. After which, it was not unusual for them to carry on with their work underground, and perhaps to endure further arrests." One woman Strobl interviewed, Julia "Chico" Manzanal, fought on the front; returned home and was imprisoned; her child died in prison with her; her boyfriend died in prison; and she herself became temporarily paralyzed from prison conditions. She still, unbelievably, entered the underground resistance after her release. Even this depth of suffering could not cage her bravery; perhaps, instead, it made any other form of life seem impossible.

been found guilty, and Republicans were punished for that crime every day. Franco's victory itself was his legitimacy and virtue, and he asserted it daily through projects of sovereign veridiction like the *Causa General*, a "fact-finding" tribunal about "war crimes." In a horrible, intensified echo of the role for which anarchists executed them, Catholic priests monitored and denounced their congregations. The war itself was referred to by the regime only as the "crusade" or "war of national liberation." And, as Spain slowly democratized in the 70s and 80s, a "pact of silence" remained: no one from the fascist side was ever brought to task for their crimes in the Civil War.

Spain was excluded from the Marshall Plan of post-WWII reconstruction, thus guaranteeing its poverty... for a time.[am] The United States did nothing to censure this totalitarian government, preferring to keep Franco as an ally against Communist governments. Indeed, the United States employed lighter shades of the same tactics at home. A vast majority of American volunteers in the war faced decades of FBI and HUAC harassment upon their return to the States; despite losing jobs and housing because of this harassment, almost none these volunteers cooperated with the government against their former comrades.[an] Having faced the guns of the fascists abroad, down-home repression was no match for the valor and commitment of these veterans. Many left the Communist Party out of disgust with the USSR, especially after the 1956 revelations about the murderous exploits of Stalinism, but few left in acquiescence to repression. Quite a few jumped right back into labor organizing; one began the publishing house that published *Negroes With Guns*, Robert F. Williams' famous memoir of struggle, and another provided the headquarters space for the SDS when it began.

am Graham: "...it was the labor mobility generated in the 1950s, once Spain's economy had been kickstarted by trade and aid agreements with the USA—effectively Spain's very own Marshall Plan—that provided a way out from the rigid hierarchies and unforgiving memories of villages and provincial towns for 'red'/defeated constituencies, most frequently in the shape of their sons and daughters. They headed as migrants to the growing cities to become the new workforce of a burgeoning industrial sector. The exodus of the poor from the rural south during these years finally 'solved' the structural problem of mass landlessness that had been at the heart of Spain's social conflict in the 1930s when the Republic attempted to address it in a more explicitly egalitarian manner." This is bitter.

an By way of comparison, "During the McCarthy period, 60% of those accused of being communists or fellow travelers in Hollywood immediately cooperated with the government. In the labor world, 40% of fingered unionists turned against their comrades. But of the 2,300 U.S. and Canadian survivors of the Spanish Civil War, all of whom were accused of disloyalty and over 2,000 of whom were harassed by the FBI or Royal Mounted Police, exactly and only 11 cooperated with the witch-hunters." (Gerassi)

The impact of the experience resonated for these participants for the rest of their lives. Evelyn Hutchins, the only female international who managed to get a role close to combat (as a driver), held on to her animosities for years. She recalls how certain undercover fascist doctors were caught doing sabotage behind Republican lines—including unnecessary amputations. "There was [a] Spaniard who got away with it, just disappeared at that point. When I spotted him and he spotted me in New York long after the Spanish Civil War, he just started running and I lost him."

Said another veteran,

> Somebody had showed me a document which revealed that all the bombs that had been used by the fascists against us were manufactured in the United States by DuPont and that the tanks that rolled over our bodies did so on Texaco fuel. So I came back to the United States exhilarated by my experience in Spain, by what I understood camaraderie and deep commitment meant on the one hand, and bitter, frustrated and angry at my government on the other... To this day, I'm proud of the fact that I was, as I have been known, a 'premature antifascist.'

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We are not in the least afraid of ruins

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The Unquiet Dead

Anarchism, Fascism, and Mythology

4. The White Goddess: Essentialism and the Land

I have felt troubled for some time over some white feminist practice and advocacy of essentialist "nature spiritualities." This tendency is certainly not limited to feminists, but I find it most upsetting as it is performed by them—the political deployment of a belief structure under the premise of sisterhood can be insidious. If we are against fascism, we must ask in what ways we are replicating its themes in our struggle for freedom, and how may we fight that tendency. I write not as part of a relentless drift towards inertia, the enforcement of identity politics that prevents movement; rather, I want to examine the real friction present between white feminists and those they are trying to save. Essentialism has poisoned our common well for too long.

While I do not wish to affirm the social construction of racial difference, I feel a difference in tone around these practices: when they are performed by people of color from the cultures that originated them, they tend to resonate as cultural reclamation or reinvention. When they are done by whites, they feel like cultural appropriation and a deepening colonialism, or else as a disturbing appeal to elements of white history that are far from innocent.[a] Of course, my perception of these practices is founded in my political alignment—the Right sees white practices along these lines as either laughable or the exercise of white rights, and the actions of people of color as fearful signs that they are building an insurrection. However, let us refuse pretended objectivity; I choose solidarity, complexity, and uncertainty instead.

When the Goddess becomes a white woman, is She any less terrifying than the Christian God—and if so, is that not a reaffirmation of essentialist misogyny? How can we approach issues of gender, race, spirituality and the "natural world" without reinforcing the oppressive constructs inherent in each? How can white people show real solidarity to those with marginalized histories, the kind of solidarity that changes our mutual present? How can people of color engaged in resistance to white supremacy and efforts towards self-actualization be recognized in ways that do not prop up racial difference or assimilationist enclosure? Perhaps these questions seem less important when they are related to issues of spirituality, or self-definition, than when they come up in contexts more transparently to do with violence or money. I do not think they are; I do not think there is really much difference.

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a Obviously, there is a third category of people here: non-white people who rely upon spiritual practices from cultures not their own. While I think this can also be problematic, it is not my specific area of critique, because white supremacy charges white appropriations with far more destructive power in our culture.

context

I am using "nature spiritualities" as an consciously inadequate umbrella term for a diverse and often contradictory array of appropriated spiritual practices, as performed in North America, but drawn from a variety of continents. They include indigenous North American beliefs and European witchcraft, Caribbean witchcraft, some Hindi beliefs, Buddhism, indigenous African beliefs, and more. Characteristics that seem to appeal to these appropriators include:

1) the practice or belief system comes from a non-Abrahamic background (it is not Christian, Jewish, or Muslim), although some heretical beliefs from those traditions are treated as acceptable sites of appropriation;
2) the belief system includes Goddess worship, and/or the practice is woman-centric;
3) the belief system is oriented towards a sense of connection to the land, to plants and animals, to the cycles of the seasons, and asserts itself as a natural, true, older form of belief;
4) the belief system has many ritual practices and does not strictly require the specific exclusion of certain types of behavior, but rather encourages certain ways of thinking. (E.g., not the strict sexual prohibitions of Christianity or Islam, but sexual ritualism and/or an idea of sex as a healing and natural practice of embodiment, the creation of life, and an affirmation of gender roles.)

By *appropriation* I mean the use of cultural, spiritual, and historical frameworks, artifacts, beliefs, aesthetics, and practices by someone who a) is not from that culture; b) is from an intersectionally elevated position in relation to that culture; c) is acting out of ignorance, an acquisitive urge, and, most likely, good intentions. Appropriation is most easily distinguished from cultural exchange, which can be beautiful and aids in building solidarity, by asking a series of questions: Was the exchange initiated by the person who holds less social power? Does the outsider have a genuine and respectful interest in the culture based on real experiences and relationships with people from that culture and/or living in their area? Does the outsider take meaningful political and social action in solidarity with the people whose cultural practices they have adopted, or are they strictly interested in the low-commitment "fun parts"? This distinction is necessarily situational, flexible, and subjective to the participants.

My critiques are US-centric, although I discuss a Canadian example as well. This is not an attempt to localize the problem, but a reflection of my personal limits of understanding and the demands of space and time. White feminism is heavily complicit in the reactionary efforts against "the end of white Europe", for example, efforts such as prohibiting migration into European countries on the premise of saving their "enlightened" cultures from "misogynist" ones... who are *coincidentally* often brown, Muslim, or otherwise outside the Western European mainstream. I am happy to see that some others are doing that critical work.[b]

The White Goddess

> And now at last it comes. You will give me the Ring freely! In place of the Dark Lord you will set up a Queen. And I shall not be dark, but beautiful and terrible as the Morning and the Night! Fair as the Sea and the Sun and the Snow upon the Mountain! Dreadful as the Storm and the Lightning! Stronger than the foundations of the earth. All shall love me and despair!
>
> —fictional white proto-goddess Galadriel

the spiritual

The resurgence of the Goddess movement in the United States began over forty years ago; I have returned to its origin documents in this section to best understand its motives and self-image. I am aware that means I am somewhat "unfairly" analyzing these writings with the aid of forty years of theoretical development since they were published. Still, Foucault had published half his work by 1970, and was lecturing at the Collège de France about biopolitics during that decade; Audre Lorde was writing, speaking, and engaging as a queer person of color within the feminist community at this time; and bell hooks was writing *Ain't I A Woman?* as an undergraduate. I do not think it is so unfair to use the theoretical frameworks popularized by these writers to critique their peers. Moreover, while the white Goddess movement has surely evolved, the trends I find most problematic within it seem to have changed very little. I will illustrate them with a few examples from the anthology *Womanspirit Rising*, originally published in 1971.

b Jasbir Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, a point of reference for this whole text, has a good overview of these critiques.

The white women's spirituality movement began as a revolution against the insidious way patriarchy affects Western values and perceptions. To live within a religion (or even to be surrounded by participants of that religion) that explicitly and implicitly describes women as lesser, subordinate, and *essentially* feminine is to suffer violence. This violence is not only psychological, but material—Silvia Frederici has brilliantly demonstrated[c] the ways in which the exclusion of women from social and political life through the spread of Christianity and the invention of witchcraft as a means of othering powerful women was necessary to the material enclosure of Europe during the feudal stage; this process served as a prerequisite for capitalism. As part of the larger second wave of feminism, women in the 1970s sought to either abandon or to critique and reform Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. It is this we are concerned with—not the turn towards atheism, but the re/establishment of woman-centric religion.

As I wish to critique the ways in which this movement betrayed its own aims, I will review some of the goals listed in the introduction of this anthology of primary essays: to oppose a dualistic worldview (man/woman, natural/artificial;) to center *experience* rather than *immanence*, following the joyful and liberating experience many had in consciousness-raising groups; to center women's bodies and their material interactions with the world; to either reinvent the past through conscious revisionist history, or to create entirely new traditions; to relate to oneself and one's gender as a part of the natural world, and/or to seek freedom and self-determination apart from determining one's own "nature."

There are obvious dialectical tensions between these goals, and I am not the first to have noticed them. As to the latter point, Christ and Plaskow's introduction asserts, "The sense of closeness to nature that some women experience in nature mysticism or in the cycles of their bodies, in menstruation, pregnancy, and birth have much to teach all women and men about the rootedness of the human condition in the natural order. ...But a focus on women's closeness to nature also has its dangers. In traditional theology and philosophy, women have been equated with nature and men with freedom and transcendence. The new focus on women and nature elevates that which traditional theology and culture have denigrated. But it does not always offer resources to understand those elements of freedom and transcendence of nature which are also part of the human condition in general and feminist experience"—such as, for example, the freedom to

c See Frederici's originary text *Caliban and the Witch*.

decide to not have children rather than to be bound to one's biology, the freedom to know oneself as not heterosexual—or, indeed, to know oneself as a woman at all.

I am interested in exploring this tension between nature and freedom, and the possibility of abolishing this and all other dualisms. I do not think women, or any people, must actually chose between nature and freedom—no one is outside nature. But when people use the word "nature", it is often as a cloak for weaponized politics; and many feminists have asserted "feminine nature" at the great expense of human freedom. In Valerie Saiving's essay "The Human Situation: A Feminine View", she asks, "Is there such a thing as an underlying feminine character structure which always and everywhere differs from the basic character structure of the male? Are not all distinctions between the sexes, except the purely biological ones, relative to a given culture?" She answers her question by returning to "objective facts" about human reproduction and human sexuality that are based in her own cultural biases and cis[d]-centrism, drawing psychological and social conclusions from the processes of puberty, menstruation, and sexuality. A sample: "The process of impregnation, pregnancy, childbirth and lactation are things which *happen* to a woman more than things she *does*. The sexual act, for example, has for her this basically passive quality... In the extreme case—rape—the passive structure of female sexuality unquestionably appears." This essay does more to demonstrate the poverty of Saiving's experience than anything fundamental about gendered experience or female nature. She draws from these blandly stated "facts" conclusions such as "...masculinity is an endless process of *becoming*, while in femininity the emphasis is on *being*" and "Perhaps the goal we should set ourselves is to rear our daughters in the older way, without too much formal education... If we could do this, our daughters might be able to find secure fulfillment in a simple femininity. After all, the division of labor between the sexes worked fairly well for thousands of years, and we may only be asking for trouble by trying to modify that structure. "

Saiving's effort is in direct conflict with the previously stated goal of valuing experience over immanance; rather, it generalizes about women's experiences, places them as immanent ("being" as opposed to "becoming"), and creates a new standard by which to validate or deny women's lives. These sad and pathetic goals—or updated, "empowered" versions—are the sorts of conclusions we can expect from attempts to explore and define women's

d Cis: to feel at home in one's gendered body; to not be transgender, genderqueer, intersex, or otherwise gender-divergent. That is, either a term that applies to very few people, or the majority of people, dependinmng upon your analysis.

essential nature. But there is a different feminist project: one that seeks to explore and question our material realities as a path towards total liberation. Its inquiries include questions like: how can we free people to transcend the socially constructed boundaries of gender, men as well as women? How can we definitively destroy what it means to be gendered in terms of how it imprisons us, does violence to us, defines us against our will? How do these forces operate in tandem with racism to most violently affect women of color?

There is also still the question of what this is all *for*, of what difference it makes beyond personal empowerment. Consciousness-raising groups used to be frequently cited as a place of political joy, of community empowerment for women. "Naming experience and recognizing that it is shared is liberating and energizing. Many women experience a kind of rebirth through consciousness-raising and feel that feminism has allowed them to live authentically for the first time in their lives. The feeling of release that comes from casting off men's definitions of women within a community of other women is the source of the early feminist slogan, 'Sisterhood is powerful!'"

But what does one do with that power? The civil rights victories won by first- and second-wave feminists have never been completed; structural misogyny in the form of the wage gap and access to career opportunities, not mention misogynist violence, still remains. While feminists aided in the gay liberation movement, the relationship between the two was and remains deeply problematic. The movement against domestic violence, started by women of color, was originally one of the most radical and patriarchy-challenging feminist struggles in the U.S. Sadly, it has become far removed from its roots in women making places of safety and protection from each other, so institutionalized that many women I worked with at a domestic violence shelter found it little better in terms of oppressive power structures than the situations from which they had escaped. For the well-off white cis women of America, the victory achieved by the consciousness-raising group is *its replacement by less overtly political forms*: careers, entertainment, and private forms of spirituality and personal empowerment. To feel liberated is to simply have greater access to privilege, thus implicitly oppressing others, unless you turn to help those further ensnared in chains. Today, the impulse towards solidarity with those most oppressed by patriarchy seems like a relic of a lost era.

This is particularly the case for white women when confronted by women whose experiences do not exactly correspond with their own. White feminists of that era (and certainly some continue to do this today) consistently made the embarrassing, racist mistake of contrasting and comparing all women with all people of color, as if women of color do not even exist.[e] Moreover, in their attempts to recognize the feminine Divine in the past, to rediscover witchcraft and nature-oriented spiritualities, they have frequently appropriated and tokenized the cultures and spiritualities of indigenous people of the present or imagined past. (Imagined, I would argue, even if they are justified with historical and anthropological narratives.) Frequently, these white feminists barely cite actual examples of women's lives or spiritual practices within particular cultures, but vaguely refer instead to the cultural imaginary of the Noble Savage. This tendency contains fairly fetishistic implications, even if it comes from simply seeking nature spirituality as the negation of Abrahamic religions. Through an anti-colonialist lens, it amounts to something like: first we murder and try to suppress you, devouring your resources and labor; later, we regurgitate your remains for a second digestion, trying to recreate your remnants for their pleasurable taste. When we levle this critique, we are told that at least it is better than eliding women of color from history... as if those were the only choices. If white women (to use the falsely monolithic language of these feminists) claim some innocence from the first by virtue of their past exclusion from public life—an extremely dubious claim, as resistance and solidarity is practiced by those in the worst circumstances—they certainly cannot claim any innocence from the second.

These two aspects of racism occurring simultaneously within white feminism are no coincidence to me. White feminists who have come to consciousness about their oppression as women, but not about their participation in white supremacy, will make this "mistake" over and over again—their entitlement to the lives of others belies their understanding of how they themselves have been oppressed and their claims to solidarity on that basis. While there are endless examples of explicitly racist and colonialist appropriation and ignorance, white feminist silence around the experiences of women of color shows the problem even more clearly than accidentally-out-loud racist remarks uttered within polite society. This silence also manifests as inaction: third wave feminism, through the work of feminists of color, has done much to center race within feminist discourse, but there is a dearth of actual solidarity from white women these days; for example, the lack of white feminist projects addressing the oppression of incarcerated women of color

e See bell hooks' pathopening work, *Ain't I A Woman*, for a thorough exploration of this phenomenon.

in the US. It is easier, apparently, to make your praxis at the intersection of race and gender to be about the imagined suffering of Muslim women under hijab, or of girls in other countries who undergo female circumcision/female genital mutilation, than it is to address the suffering for which you are directly responsible as a participant in your own community's white supremacy and misogyny.

This tendency to simultaneously exclude and exoticize, to "other" and to want the Other (in whatever coded and veiled forms) is at the heart of white supremacy as well as misogyny. It is founded in essentialism, and it is this I feel white feminists are returning to in their well-meaning attempts to locate and worship the Goddess, or the feminine in nature, or the feminine nature. When the Goddess is white, how is She any less terrifying an image than a white God in a white supremacist society? To assert She must necessarily be a kinder, more loving, more naturally attuned Divine presence is to be out of touch with the ways in which women have hurt each other along lines of race, sex, and gender conformity. Because we have lived within a patriarchal society all our lives, it is tempting to believe that women are only victims—but to do so is itself misogynist. Women are no less capable of abusing power than men *in their essence*, as opposed to in our *shared material conditions*, which do tend to favor men—although the point at which any assertion becomes general is the point at which it is no longer true; any specific man might be more injured by our reality than any specific woman. The supposedly liberatory Goddess of white feminist creation is based in the imagined mythic rather than in the material experience of our lives—and how often has what people imagine the feminine to be materially hurt women? This is not creating an image of Divinity that reflects women's experiences, it is the simple replacement of the imaginary father with the imaginary mother, with equal authoritarian force no less abusive than its male-coded form.

In her essay "Motherearth and the Megamachine: A Theology of Liberation in a Feminine, Somatic and Ecological Perspective", Rosemary Radford Butler almost immediately describes proto-fascist movement as the enemy of women: "The reaction against and suppression of the Woman's Liberation Movement has been closely tied to reactionary cultural and political movements, and the emancipated woman has been the chief target of elitism, fascism, and neoconservatism of all kinds. The romantic movement traumatized Europe's reaction to the French Revolution, reinstated the traditional view of women in idealized form, while the more virulent blood-and-soil reactionaries of the nineteenth century expressed a more naked misogynism." I concur. But she fails to learn her own lesson: the main thrust of her essay is that we

should all return what anthropologists and historians portray as a nature-oriented, holistic spirituality. This is exactly what the Volkische ideologues who promoted blood-and-soil strife called for; the two differ only in their beliefs about the role of women in such a society.[f] Her work is interesting in that it indicts civilization as a whole for its destruction of the wild, enclosure, and misogyny, but falls dramatically short in addressing those issues in our present reality, calling instead for a return to the natural. It is hypocritical to decry the Nazis from one side of your mouth while echoing their views from the other, even if you have replaced "Aryan men" with racially-nonspecific—but, given your lack of specificity and personal placement, probably white—women as your "natural" subject.

I call for a turning away from these issues of nature, essence, and the search for validation in a reconstruction of the Divine. Instead, I celebrate the occasional return of feminism to the material: to real solidarity, to internationalism and to local struggle. While we may find our individual spiritualities helpful in struggle, the thing itself must not be based in a mythology of the Divine, but in our shared, diverse experiences. If "Sisterhood is powerful," as people found in their early experiences of consciousness-raising groups, let us use that power not only for self-directed empowerment, or for dressing up in the rituals we have stolen from others, but for actual liberation. And while I use "we" aspirationally, to evoke the sort of solidarity and community we would all like to see among feminists, let me be clear: this is a call to white cis feminists in particular. Refuse to become the oppressors you have long resisted, no matter how good the bribe.

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f In fact, Nazis were not above promising gifts of empowerment to women who cooperated with them when times were desperate; Goebbels made such a pledge in his "Total War" speech.

In hopes of moving through and out of the negative aspects of feminism towards its potential for freedom, I will begin with betrayal, move to solidarity, and end with revolt.

betrayal

Mary Daly is one of the pioneers of radical feminism; her writing has been incredibly influential to the movement, if also quite controversial. While I will not attempt to cover her work in depth, I wish to compare two aspects of her politics that I find contradictory—her avowed rejection of patriarchal spirituality, and her intense transphobia.

In her 1971 essay "After the Death of God the Father: Women's Liberation and the Transformation of Women's Consciousness", Daly reviews the accomplishments of the women's liberation movement around spirituality and proposes future work. She suggests that feminists have made an incomplete critique of patriarchal elements within Christianity to understand its call towards transcendence, which uses the idea of God to "legitimate oppression, particularly that of women. These are irredeemably anti-feminine and therefore antihuman." The end of women's oppression, far from being necessarily atheist, could mean a greater closeness between humans and the Divine: "The becoming of women may not only be the doorway to deliverance from the omnipotent Father in all his disguises—a deliverance which secular humanism has passionately fought for—but also a doorway to something; that is, the beginning for many of a more authentic search for transcendence; that is, for God." She argues that Christianity has divided the sexes and sought to assign activity and sin to men, and passivity and virtue to women—thus simultaneously disenfranchising men from their ability to be passive and/or virtuous, and women from their abilities to actively liberate themselves. "This emphasis upon the passive virtues, of course, has not challenged exploitativeness but supported it. Part of the syndrome is the prevailing notion of sin as an offense against those in power, or against 'God' (the two are often equated.)" She calls not only for women to take up their power, but for men to seek to free themselves from the chains of gendered expectations—importantly, she calls also for an extension of these analyses beyond the lines of gender: "The consciousness raising which is beginning among women is evoking a qualitatively new understanding of the subtle mechanisms which produce and destroy "the other", and a consequent empathy with all of the oppressed. This gives grounds for the hope that their

emergence can generate a counterforce to the exploitative mentality which is destroying persons and the environment... The work of fostering religious consciousness which is explicitly incompatible with sexism will require an extraordinary degree of creative rage, love, and hope. ”

I am largely in concurrence with this essay's critique of Christianity. I am pleased by how her analysis understands men to also be, however differently, entrapped by gender, and by how she calls for the extension of one's raised consciousness to include understanding, solidarity, and “creative rage” in the de/construction of society. That appreciation and sense of connection makes her later horrifying, hateful attacks on trans women that much more shocking. This intimate betrayal on the part of cis feminists is very common, but still not easy to bear.

Daly's 1978 work *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* is most notable for the style in which it is written—a dreamy mix of non-standard spellings and capitalizations, pagan imagery, and in-depth coverage of various misogynist horrors—which, not incidentally, she mostly cites as occurring within non-white cultures. Mixed in with her outrage about “African genital mutilation: the unspeakable atrocities”, foot binding, and *suttee*, Daly manages to call out “transsexualism” eight times. In example: “Dionysus sometimes assumed a girl-like form. The phenomenon of the drag queen dramatically demonstrates such boundary violations. Like whites playing “black face”, he incorporates the oppressed role without being incorporated in it. ” She continues, following noted transphobe Janice Raymond: “The majority of transsexuals are “male to female”, while transsexed females basically function as tokens, and are used by the rulers of the transsexual empire to hide the real nature of the game... The surgeons and hormone therapists of the transsexual kingdom, in their effort to give birth, can be said to produce feminine persons. They cannot produce women. ”

Just as Sandy Stone answered Janice Raymond’s accusations about the “Transsexual Empire” in her important piece “The Empire Strikes Back”, the gender studies scholar Susan Stryker has brilliantly answered and transcended Mary Daly's accusations of monstrosity in her piece “Letter to Doctor Frankenstein...” I will not attempt to recreate their work, nor am I capable of doing so. I wish to only briefly highlight some of Daly's most flagrant betrayals of her own politics.

The impulse to guard the garden of oppression is a strange one. Having come together and shared stories of common pain, "conscious" people often turn inwards—and become vicious to one another. Sometimes this is legitimate—hearing someone reflect your own pain back at you, then hearing them betray you in the next breath is painful, and deserves critique. Often, however, it means recreating the same power dynamics you are in struggle against: this is what happened for American cis feminists vis à vis trans women in the great wars of the 1970s and 1980s. Daly, Raymond, and others regard trans women as male pretenders: "*Like whites playing "black face", he incorporates the oppressed role without being incorporated in it.*" Besides its offensive and invisibilizing equation of racism and alleged misogyny, this statement reflects a willful ignorance of the violent oppression trans women face, a violence statistically much more deadly than it is for the average cis woman. Additionally, why would anyone *want* to steal the oppressed role? For someone to out herself as a potential target of misogyny when she "need not" experience it in the most direct of ways (although living closeted is its own particular hell), her experience of womanhood may be, if anything, be particularly necessary—particularly essential, if you must. Daly makes no attempt to reflect on this, preferring instead to police the boundaries of womanhood. In doing so, she joins the ranks of patriarchal oppression, allying herself with her supposed enemies. While in her earlier essay "God the Father", she called for feminists to welcome the Other, and to see Othering as a fundamental part of women's oppression, she makes no attempt to do so herself here.

Daly claims an essential knowledge of womanhood in her statement that doctors cannot produce women. I do not even disagree with her on that particular, because I believe womanhood is not dependent on surgeries or vaginas or estrogen levels. I know this from my experience as a trans person, from my solidarity with and love for particular trans feminine people, and from my political understanding that we are all collections of constructions, identities, experiences, and bodies. I know that being a woman is dependent far more on one's identity as such than on one's body and material experience; that trans feminine bodies are women's bodies, no matter how their bodies are constituted; and that trans women often live the material reality of struggling to survive the cutting edge of misogynist violence. It is a massive failure on the part of cis feminists like Daly that they are part of inflicting, rather than opposing, this misogyny.

Her practical wrongness about the function of trans men as "tokens" is interesting; most queers will tell you that, these days, there are more visible trans masculine people than trans feminine people... and that we take up far

more space, replicating the patterns of patriarchy. In my view, trans men do this not only because of our reproduction of learned masculinity (which in this culture is already always enclosed by patriarchy) but also because, sometimes, trans men implicitly feel themselves to be the exception to the rule—that because they grew up being perceived as and perhaps socialized as female, they cannot now transgress against women, need not hold themselves to the same standards as cis men. This problem is similar to the mistake Daly is making: it is the unconsciously held belief that, having once come to consciousness about one's own oppression, one cannot in turn oppress others. (I think that this is also near the heart of white feminist racism.) Transphobia against trans men also comes from this logic: in Pattrice Jones' book *Aftershock: Confronting Trauma in a Violent World*, she makes the following wild claim:

> Between 1910 and 1920, over five hundred thousand people in the United States "passed" into whiteness by changing their self-designated race. Nowadays, more and more young women—having learned what happens to girls in today's world—are literally turning themselves into men to protect themselves from violation. And, of course, the majority of us side with the butcher rather than risk being made into meat.

While, as I said, I want to hold trans men as accountable for their alliances with patriarchy as I do cis men, the idea that trans men transition only to gain male privilege is an expression of the same sad tendency to guard the garden of oppression (in this case, judging from Jones' self-definition, probably the lesbian community) as Daly's hatred of trans women. It is especially shameful in a work that purports to be a tool for people who have experienced trauma.

The comparison both authors make to racial boundary-crossing is concerning. It is no doubt an inheritance of the white feminist tendency to compare the struggles of women and people of color. I think it is a little worse than that, however, a kind of peculiar fascination with the transgression of boundaries, the unresolved horror at the heart of fearing the Other. Daly compares female genital mutilation/female circumcision to the genital surgery some trans women choose to have:

> It is interesting to compare these attempts to feminize women [via FGM] with the feminization of male-to-constructed-female transsexuals. The latter, who consider themselves to be "women" (referring to "other" women as "native women"[g]) undergo operations which remove the

g In my many years of experience within the trans community, I have never heard

> testicles and penis and give them artificial vaginas, but no clitoris. Both of these mutilating attempts at feminization receive a large amount of legitimation by phallocracy.

What she means by "a large amount of legitimation by phallocracy" in the case of trans women, I can barely imagine—does the daily bread of murder, hatred and marginalization inflicted upon trans women count as legitimation in her eyes? In any case, her deployment of the white cis gaze upon genitals under the guise of pseudo-scientific "interest" is disturbing. She covers *suttee*, Chinese foot binding, and African female genital mutilation all with the same sort of horrified fascination she directs at American trans women. For Daly, the *essence* of being a woman seems to be scrutinizing other women for signs of abnormality while using herself as the standard.

solidarity

Starhawk has been a member of Pagan and activist communities since the 1980s. She has written several influential books; I examined just one, *Dancing the Dark*. Starhawk's work is centered around the healing of self in conjunction with healing of the world. She believes that our society is sick and our earth is endangered because of harmful views we hold of ourselves, and that one can use Pagan magic and activism to change all three. Her work transcends several of my critiques of white feminist practioners of nature spiritualities, though not all of them.

Starhawk argues that our current social situation is one of *estrangement* (perhaps what Marx would call *alienation*) of people from the material world; her alternate proposal relies upon a rejection of duality. Under Christianity, "flesh, nature, woman, and sexuality [are] identified with the Devil and the forces of evil. God was envisioned as male—uncontaminated by the processes of birth, nurturing, growth, menstruation, and the decay of the flesh. He was removed from this world into a transcendent realm of spirit somewhere else." More fundamentally, she sees "the good guys/girls against the bad guys/girls" as one of the basic frameworks of estrangement: "Light is idealized and dark is devalued in this story that permeates our culture. The war of dark and light is the metaphor that perpetuates racism... The light/dark metaphor was the underlying theme of Nazi propaganda... The same splitting of light and dark buttresses the splitting of spirit (light) and body (dark), of male and female, of culture and nature. The split becomes the metaphor of hierarchy... it supports power-over. Beware of organizations

such a thing, and am inclined to think Daly invented it.

that proclaim their devotion to the light without embracing, bowing to the dark; for when they idealize half the world they must devalue the rest." She is expressing a fundamentally anti-essentialist perspective here: essentialism relies upon duality, the splitting process by which othering is made possible.

Starhawk envisions a healthy Pagan spiritual understanding as one that unites the spiritual and the physical and defies gendered understandings of corresponding concepts. This framework would oppose the dualist estrangement that enables domination and othering, drawing instead upon a unified identity and worldview. "We are most familiar with power-over, with structures of domination and control that derive ultimately from a worldview that removes sacred value from the earth and from the cycles of birth and death. In this book, I identify a different sort of power I call power-from-within, akin to the root meaning of power as *ability*, and derived from the recognition that each of us has immanent sacred value." This definition of immanence amounts more to an argument for personal autonomy in Starhawk's work than as an essentialist call for refusing action and transformation, as it did in Rosemary Butler's work.

Starhawk uses gendered and personified symbols of worship, Goddess and God, and feels that this gendering is important as an answer to patriarchy: "The female image of divinity does not... provide a justification for the oppression of men. The female, who gives birth to the male, includes the male in a way that male divinities cannot include the female. " This "giving birth" metaphor is, sadly, is body-dependent. However, she explicitly rejects the worst possibilities of Goddess worship: "...I recognize that there is a danger in the use of any symbol—that people will forget the principles it represents. The Goddess could be taken as an object of external worship in a context no less hierarchical and oppressive than that of any religion of patriarchy. Let us be clear that when I say *Goddess* I am not talking about a being somewhere outside of this world, nor am I proposing a new belief system. I am talking about choosing an attitude: choosing to take this living world, the people and creatures on it, as the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, to see the world, the earth, and our lives as sacred." While she continues to rely on gendered and body-dependent metaphors throughout her book, she tends to complicate or differently slant them, as when she describes how, in her view, worshipping a Maternal force necessarily means supporting access to abortions. Importantly, she critiques the family as the smallest unit of oppression , rather than uncritically drawing on it as a site of feminine exaltation, as did Valerie Saiving.

Starhawk falls occasionally into what might be considered Noble Savage rhetoric: "The room in which I sit... is different from a house belonging to one of the Dogon people in Africa, where every space has a ritual, symbolic meaning as part of a human body, and different from a tepee of the Plains Indians, built to be transported as part of the cycles of migration. This room is an object in a world of separate, isolated objects. The Dogon house and the tepee are sets of relationships in a world of interwoven processes. " Although social understandings do, obviously, shape our material environment, and capitalism is dependent on alienation, from a worker's perspective the modern American home is just as much a "set of relationships in a world of interwoven processes", not fundamentally different from these other structures—just existing within an atmosphere of outright coercion. Starhawk is here lazily relying upon the liberal assumption that non-white or non-capitalist lifestyles are fundamentally superior. For the most part, though, I feel that she pays respectful attention rather than appropriates in her references to indigenous cultures, although my judgment, as a non-indigenous person, is necessarily limited.

Rather ominously, Starhawk notes that "In Europe, the old cultures rise again... The empires come apart at the seams." She makes positive reference to a series of pre-Empire white cultures, with seemingly no idea of the last time older white cultures were evoked in Europe in terms of resisting Empire—this after just, pages earlier, describing her actual San Francisco neighborhood with pleasure in its diversity, which I find a more inspiring and useful reference point. She continues: "In the Southwest of the United States, in the Black Hills, the Indian tribes still fight to survive. Perhaps it is time for all of us to *reconsider our loyalties, to consider what might further human survival.* [emphasis mine] Our work is not just sawing the legs off the ladders, but building the structures that replace them." Probably what she means here is supporting indigenous sovereignty, rather than anything more like fascism, but she does so fairly uncritically. Still, I think Starhawk is speaking in good faith, if foolishly.

Starhawk's model of a ritual circle begins with all of the participants focusing on their goals for changing their lives and the world for the better, and ends with everyone voicing a step they will take for advancing their goals. This is already more oriented towards action than most of what we have previously considered; also, it means that each religious practice is more constituted of the needs and experiences of its participants than of attendance to a pre-agreed set of principles. In this way it resembles a reflective meeting to accomplish individual and community goals more than a religious duty. Furthermore, Starhawk's spirituality and life approach is in general one of political action. She describes doing various rituals as means of practicing conflict against various forces, largely

nuclear bases. She speaks of this through Goddess metaphor:

> In this action we became Persephone, as we were dragged off by the forces of patriarchy to do our time in the underworld and then emerge again. We became Demeter, who sits at the gate, who rends her clothes and says, "This cannot go on!" "It is categories in the mind and guns in their hands that keep us enslaved." Somehow, facing the guns in their hands makes clear to us which categories in our minds are their agents...
>
> ...I have grown used to thinking of policemen as my friends. Here, however, it is very clear that the powers of the police, the courts, and the military are at one with the nuclear power industry, with all the forms of power that threaten to poison these oaks, this ocean, our living human bodies. That is obvious when the police have dragged me away and locked me up—oblivious to my sore wrists and skinned knees. Not that I mind having skinned knees—it adds to that sense of being a child again, even though the stakes here are not playful, but too real.
>
> ...here, frustration is gone. I feel like a victim released by a vampire—my blood is my own again. What has freed me is action. I have acted with my body, using not just words, but my whole being. I have become fully a part of this community of resistance, putting forth effort and taking risks. To be present with skills and patience I have for listening, for evoking feelings, for soothing hurts, for saying the right thing, and for knowing when to shut up is healing; *it is the only spiritual discipline that makes sense to me in a nuclear age*. [emphasis mine]

Starhawk intertwines her spiritual, political, and personal action such that each supports the other; conflictual action is not left out of the equation, as it so often is by the privileged. She is aware of her privilege, also. She describes dancing naked with two hundred women in jail from a protest, and the uneasy mix of exhilaration and fear she experiences around deliberately performing such an act while in jail. She reflects:

> ...we dance, knowing that we are allowed this as a privilege, as so much of what has been good in our lives is a privilege; knowing that women who are in jail alone, who are not white, who do not have a movement and a legal team behind them, whose stories are not of interest to the newspapers, cannot dance, cannot go naked, may be raped and brutalized—not smiled at—by the guards. Yet we dance, because this is, after all, what we are fighting for: this life, these bodies, breasts, wombs, this smell of flesh; this joy; this

freedom—that it continue, that it prevail.

Although I am not aware of specific work Starhawk has done in solidarity with prisoners, this is, at least, acknowledgement of their struggle. While I think Starhawk's framework, understanding, and impulse towards action are all stronger than those I have previously reviewed, I can only hope that her understanding contributes to a real widening of solidarity, one that destroys borders of privilege between people more than it strengthens them through the use of identity.

revolt

One last white feminist who evokes the Goddess: Monique Wittig. She was foundational to French materialist feminism, and was publically anti-essentialist before that critique entered mainstream feminist discourse. She joins these two lines of thought by arguing that gender is a social construction, but one reinforced by material oppression that tends to fall along gendered lines—although those lines are fluid. She joined many other less academic feminists in critiquing essentialism in her essay "One is Not Born A Woman", a title drawn from Simone de Beauvoir's originary work *The Second Sex*. Famously, she says that a heterosexist society is necessary for the maintenance of gender, since the idea of "woman" as a deviation from the idea of "man" flows from this created oppressive duality; she argues that lesbians are not, therefore, properly "women."[h] She therefore suggests the radical abolition of traditional gendered understanding.

> What does "feminist" mean? Feminist is formed with the word "femme", "woman", and means: someone who fights for women. For many of us it means someone who fights for women as a class and for the disappearance of this class. For many others it means someone who fights for woman and her defense—for the myth, then, and its re-enforcement.

She observes that essentialism is also necessary for the production of race in our society:

> ...what we take for the cause or origin of oppression is in fact only the *mark* imposed by the oppressor: the "myth of woman, plus its material effects and manifestations in the appropriated consciousness and bodies of women. Thus, this mark does not predate oppression: Collete Guillaumin has shown

h Puar would no doubt argue that, while this was the case for a time, white lesbians who have agreed to participate in capitalist America have now been welcomed into heterosexist society.

> that before the socioeconomic reality of black slavery, the concept of race did not exist, at least not in its modern meaning, since it was applied to the lineage of families. However, now, race, exactly like sex, is taken as an "immediate given", a "sensible given", "physical features," belonging to a natural order. But what we believe to be a physical and direct perception is only a sophisticated and mythic construction, an "imaginary formation", which reinterprets physical features (in themselves as neutral as any others but marked by the social system) through the network of relationships in which they are perceived. (They are seen as *black*, therefore they *are* black; they are seen as *women*, therefore they *are* women. But before being *seen* that way, they first had to be *made* that way.)

Here Wittig does not quite fall into the classic white feminist trap of invisibilizing black women by comparing black and female experience, as if the two could not be shared by the same person, but she skates perilously close by not explicitly acknowledging it. Knowing that the rationale for power acting upon bodies is a socially constructed one is not enough to prevent one from doing the same. Still, her highlighting of constructed difference is useful.

Wittig's novel *Les Guérilleres*, published in 1969, is a revolutionary and romantic call to erase our predicates... and has been greatly misunderstood as a text that affirms essentialism. It is the disconnected story of a violent war against patriarchy by—from the view of the English translation—women. It takes the form of dreamy prose, lists of women's names mixed with paragraphs that convey information in the form "The women say..." However, here at this very fundamental level, lies an important translation error. Wittig intentionally wrote her book with the French pronoun "*elles*", a gender-neutral pronoun for which the closest English equivalent is "they"; she strongly objected to the translator's use of "the women" instead.[i] From Wittig's essay "The Mark of Gender":

> When *elles* is turned into the women the process of universalization is destroyed. All of a sudden, *elles* stopped being mankind. ...Not only was my undertaking with the collective pronoun *elles* lost, but another word was introduced, the word women appearing obsessively throughout the text, and it is one of those gender-marked words mentioned earlier which I never use in French. For me it is the equivalent of slave, and in fact, I have actively opposed its use whenever possible.

While her equation of "woman" and "slave" is, again, problematic, Wittig is

i Nevertheless, I have abided by the English translation's use of "the women" in my quotations.

doing something important here. It is not just that she was trying to convey that men as well as women were rebelling against patriarchy; she specifically describes a few instances of such gender treachery:

> A woman sings... At a given moment, interrupting her song, she falls down, she writhes about, she is racked by sob. At once other cries other sobs are heard. Behind the trees they discover a young man, prostrate, trembling in every limb, cheeks salt with tears, full of grace and beauty. Taking him in their arms, the women bear him to the side of the young weeping woman, applauding when they recognize each other and embrace. Then they express their satisfaction. They inform the young man that he is the first to have joined them in their struggle. They all embrace him. One of the women brings him a rifle, saying that she will teach him to handle it after the celebration they prepare in his honor.

But Wittig's larger point is that this is a rebellion of people against patriarchy, all people, and therefore means the abolition of gender, which is always a marker of difference—the line that perpetuates an ongoing war.

> The women address the young men in these terms, now that you understand we have been fighting as much for you as for ourselves. In this war, which was also yours, you have taken part. Today, together, let us repeat as our slogan that all traces of violence must disappear from this earth, then the sun will be honey-colored and music good to hear. The young men applaud and shout with all their might. They have brought their arms. The women bury them at the same time as their own saying, let there be erased from human memory the longest most murderous war it has ever known, the last possible war in history. They wish the survivors, both male and female, love strength youth, so that they may form a lasting alliance that no future dispute can compromise. One of the women begin to sing, Like unto ourselves/ men who open their mouths to speak/a thousand thanks to those who have understood our language/and not having found it excessive/have joined with us to transform the world.

The people invoke the names of several goddesses of war, from different cultures—Amaterasu, Cihuacoatl, Eristikos, Minerva—as they prepare to fight. In example: "They say, how to decide that an event is worthy of remembrance? Must Amaretasu herself advance on the forecourt of the temple, her face shining, blinding the eyes of those who, prostrate, put their foreheads to the ground and dare not lift their heads? ...Must the rays from her slanting mirror set fire to the ground beneath the feet of the women who have come to pay homage to the sun goddess, the greatest of the goddesses? Must her anger be

exemplary? " This kind of gnomic, prophetic repetition is typical of the book's style and topic: a fantastical war set in a long-ago-and-far-away. For me, this fictionalization, this blatant construction, makes these references to archetypal goddesses not only acceptable but moving. The mythology is all of one part; goddesses have not here been appropriated to prop up someone's thesis, or for an individual's personal identity. Rather, they are invoked as part of a common, presently-created, mythology of rebellion.

The people in Wittig's novel also frequently discuss "female" anatomy , and use it as a reference point for their experiences and struggle. While this is far from my favorite rhetorical device, the following passage shows their collective movement through and away from such references, and towards a generalization of struggle.

> The women say, the men have kept you at a distance, they have supported you, they have put you on a pedestal, constructed with an essential difference. They say, men in their way have adored you like a goddess or else burned you at their stakes or else relegated you to service in their backyards. They say, in doing so they have always in their speech dragged you in the dirt. They say, in speaking they have possessed violated taken subdued humiliate you to their hearts' content. They say, oddly enough what they have exalted in their words as an essential difference is a biological variation. They say, they have described you as they described the races they called inferior. They say, yes, these are the same domineering oppressors, the same masters who have said that negroes and women do not have a heart spleen liver in the same place as their own, that difference of sex difference of colour signify inferiority, their own right to domination and appropriation. They say, yes, these are the same domineering oppressors who have written of negroes and women that they are universally cheats hypocrites tricksters liars shallow greedy faint-hearted, that their thinking is intuitive and illogical, that nature is what speaks most loudly in them, et cetera. They say, yes, these are the same domineering oppressors who sleep crouched over their money bags to protect their wealth and who tremble with fear when night comes.

This passage points out that the war on patriarchy is a war on essentialism—that essentialism is directed primarily along gendered and raced lines. Feminists who fearfully guard the garden of oppression fail to see that their opponents—when their opponents are pointing out their racism and transphobia, anyway—are only calling them further down their shared political trajectory; not invaders, not occupiers, not appropriators, but comrades asking for camaraderie in turn. Wittig's novel, a lyrical ode to what it might mean to revolt, illustrates that it is better to consciously make things up than to appeal to such broken kinds of authenticity.

Part II. Difference and Sameness in Relationship to Land

"The field of readings in tension with each other is also part of the point. Eco-feminism and the non-violent direct action movement have been based on struggles over differences, not on identity. There is hardly a need for affinity groups and their endless process if sameness prevailed."

—Donna Haraway

Derrick Jensen calls for us to "listen to the land" in the title of his collected essays and interviews about ecological devastation and struggle. Despite its apparent benevolence, I find this a problematic call. Using the natural landscape to justify one's philosophy imposes human concepts and interpretations (most often from the dominant culture) onto that landscape. This tends to reinforce misanthropic and dualistic viewpoints, decentering the idea that humans and our creations are components of and participants within ecology. In justifying their interpretations, people like Derrick Jensen, Lierre Kieth, and others also tend to use (anthropologists' ideas about) indigenous people's lifeways as both a model and a justification for their own politics: the brown Other becomes a filter for the white relationship to nature. This is no less a continuation of colonialism than the green capitalism these radicals revile. Deep ecologist methodology also tends to reinforce problematic ideas of historicity, anti-modernism, place, and ethnicity as sites of veridiction and authenticity. As many Leftists—as well as white nationalists—become interested in "going back to the land" in projects which run the gamut from eco-tourism to homesteading to white-only land projects, it becomes vital for us to question the role of whiteness in such projects. We must ask what a realistic, and anti-essentialist relationship to land may look like, and find our way towards a practice of solidarity with human and non-human struggles alike. For white people, who have inherited a cultural legacy of enforcing their own dominance through land seizure, genocide, and environmental devastation, this may prove a challenge—but, luckily, there is no *essential* relationship between the past and the present, only the weight of history.

Towards this project, Donna Haraway calls for a reorientation: to form, following Trinh, an "in/appropriate" relationship to nature, to emphasize our degrees of difference and relation as parts of an ecosystem. Sara Ahmed's work around queer phenomenology is also relevant to this question. In thinking through what it means to live on land, whether urban or rural, I want to find a way that is ethically rich and oriented towards struggle, and yet avoids crypto-fascist mystification. I propose components of Bookchin's

philosophy of social ecology, practices of indigenous solidarity, Anna Tsing's analysis of *contaminated diversity*, and the prioritization of ecological relationship in our analysis. I want a struggle in relationship with the whole world, one that exists within a historical and ecological context... but which defies those bounds as part of its own movement towards liberation. There are other worlds than these.

deep ecology and eco-feminism

Deep ecology is the child of social ecology, which we shall investigate later. It is called so to highlight its opposition to "shallow" ecology, which focuses on stewardship and conservation of "natural resources" for human use. Instead, deep ecology asks us to value the wild for its sake. It prioritizes the interconnectedness of all things—not just humans, but also not just living things—*all* things that are not man-made. It places higher importance on this overall system than on the individuals that inhabit it, and urges those individuals to identify with the whole over the parts; "the world is your body." Deep ecologists are critical of civilization, which they describe as the source of the current wholesale destruction of the natural environment; sometimes this critique extends all the way back to the beginnings of agriculture. They often also describe patriarchy (or even masculinity) as root problems in both ecological destruction and human social violence.

While I appreciate the deep ecologist emphasis on life for its own sake, as opposed to the human use for it, I find most other elements in this approach disturbing. For one, the emphasis on the wild—I do not think it is easy to say that any part of the world is truly wild, undisturbed by human (or even specifically Western) influences, uncontaminated by chemicals, etc. The sorts of ecologists who tend to dichotomize purity and wilderness with contamination and civilization often adopt the most problematic manifestations of essentialism. For example, Jane Caputi, whose work deals primarily with the exploitation of the "female body" by advertisers, serial killers, and surgeons, says that "[w]hat is acted out on the female body parallels larger practices of domination, fragmentation, and conquest against the earth body, which is being polluted, strip-mined, deforested, and cut up into parcels of private property." She sees this as a manifestation of the Western tendency to Other, and she has a point. Usefully, she discusses the ways in which the working class (and people of color, I would add) are depicted as "closer to nature" to make them yet another resource to be exploited.

But Caputi, like many deep ecologists, does not refrain from embracing the idea of *the natural as the feminine*. Her work calls for women to identify themselves with nature, to see their oppression as the oppression of the earth, and to disavow civilization as well as patriarchy as their enemies on this basis. While this is probably intended as reclamation, I do not see how accepting the tendency of Western patriarchy to dichotomize and equate men with civilization and women with nature is a gesture of resistance. Rather, I see it furthering violence against women, particularly women who are Othered in multiple ways at once—queer women, women of color, and trans women. It is used to caricature these women as even *more* natural, producing images of the Latina woman who is in touch with amorphously invoked ancient traditions of motherhood, sexuality and earthliness; the lesbian who is conducting ancient Sapphic rites of matriarchy; the trans woman who is made acceptable only via calling upon indigenous traditions about Two Spirit people. Or, they are *excluded* from nature: the black inner-city woman who is too "urban" and trivial to be taken seriously as part of an ecology; the lesbian who is an aberrant symptom of modernity, who would not exist in a Social Darwinist world; the trans woman who might choose to modify her body with the aid of medical intervention not previously available is either a technological monster to be feared, or a traitorous man only masquerading as a woman, intent on doing "real women" harm. This analysis also commonly confuses men or masculinity with patriarchy, a distinction that should remain clear—or is half of the population utterly doomed, unable to resist cooperating with the social force that also oppresses them? This equation, and all others so general, do us nothing but harm.

Even if some points about the dualistic eco-feminist critique feel useful, they are too often generalized. Dr. Huey-Li Li, in her essay "A Cross-Cultural Critique of Ecofeminism", points out that most Western eco-feminists assume that their analyses of Western civilization apply to all civilization. In asserting that the oppressions of women and nature are linked by patriarchy's tendency to exploit, dominate and consume, Western eco-feminists ignore the fact that, in traditional Chinese culture, both misogyny and respect for nature are common. "Consider, for example, the puzzling fact that the absence of transcendent dualism in Chinese society does not preclude women's being oppressed. There are no parallels between Chinese people's respectful attitude towards nature and the inferior social position of women. The association of women and nature is not a cross-cultural phenomenon, since nature as a whole is not identified with women in Chinese society." Li says that the modern Chinese exploitation of nature is rooted in recent economic pressures—an analysis that could be easily applied to Western

environmental destruction, as well—while misogyny has deeper roots. As Chinese civilization is quite old, one might continue to argue that misogyny and civilization are necessarily linked while keeping China in mind, but its example rather neatly disproves the necessity of environmental destruction to the civilization/patriarchy paradigm. One might more easily argue that the economic pressures of expansion and imperialism facilitate both women's oppression as reproducers of the working and fighting class and eco-destruction as wilderness is razed and built over by warfare and settlement... but such Marxist analysis is usually rejected by deep ecologists. The reactionary eco-feminist analysis that accepts the woman/nature patriarchy/civilization dualism propagated by those in power is therefore not only self-defeating, but an example of hegemonic colonialism.

The Western eco-feminist viewpoint often, Li points out, relies on the idea of a prior matriarchal culture of natural harmony against which men are rebelling, and claims that this woman/nature/before trope is the key to solving both misogyny and environmental destruction. It bears mentioning that there is no record of a global matriarchal society preceding patriarchy. The reality is more complicated—there are currently extant matriarchal societies, like the Mosuo and the Minangkabau; there are indigenous practices that seem misogynist to white Western viewers; there are ancient traditions of patriarchy that continue to inform Western society today—and so on. It is counterproductive to evoke the imaginary of the peaceful garden where women and "female values" reigned supreme before the Fall, and its counterpoint of the modern, entirely male-dominated society in which women are the first and only victims, never complicit in enforcing gendered oppression. Such imaginaries are deeply rooted in patriarchal Abrahamic traditions. Moreover, the fascist movements we have discussed in previous sections serve as a warning against glorifying the past and seeking its resurrection in the bodies of the living.

Nor is the problem of eco-destruction rooted in gendered biology, as some would have it. Li observes that "men's inability to gestate[sic] does not universally lead to the pursuit of transcendence." Therefore, eco-destruction and patriarchy must not be solely based in a meta-Freudian resentment of the womb, or anything similar. The fact that men have historically had more power than women in dominant societies, and therefore have performed more acts of environmental destruction and warfare, does not make those acts essentially impossible for women—in the metapatriarchy we live under today, women often participate in both. That does not erase the history of patriarchy that haunts us, it merely means its manifestations are more

complex than most eco-feminists acknowlege. And, even when eco-feminists coming from the sort of analysis Li is critiquing are doing their best to be polite about gendered difference, they tend to fail. Although Caputi includes trans people as token members of nature in her defense of the gendered concept "Mother Earth", she does not hesitate to multiply cite the famous transphobe Mary Daly. These sorts of well-intentioned blind spots give the lie to her thesis—you cannot simply say you are not intending to offend anyone when the allies you call upon to support your truth-claims are partisans of oppression.

Deep ecologists who equate masculinity with patriarchy and patriarchy with civilization indict all women who willingly participate in civilization as gender traitors, and all men, whether civilization has made them net victors or victims in ways beyond their gender status, as the root enemy. Lierre Keith:

> The very creation myth of Western civilization tells men to dominate, to conquer, to go forth and multiply. No hunter-gatherer is told by god to wilfully overshoot the landbase, and no marginally rational person would listen to such a god. But that is what we are up against. This is a culture of profound entitlement, based on a masculine violation imperative. That imperative includes violating the sexual boundaries of women and children; the biological boundaries of rivers and forests; the genetic boundaries of other species; and ultimately, the physical boundaries of the atom itself.
>
> The ruling religion of this planet is called patriarchy. We will not save life on this earth until we dismantle masculinity. You will be punished for saying that out loud.

Here, by the subtle art of semiotic transmutation, Keith has equated Western civilization to patriarchy, patriarchy to masculinity, masculinity to sexual violence, sexual violence to environmental destruction, environmental destruction to biology and physics—and she links those back to Western civilization and masculinity. This overly simplistic equation does us harm. How can we instead practically combat the destructive realities of the present, and acknowledge our own varied levels of responsibility and guilt in its creation, with respect to historical reality, material context, and lived intention/self-knowledge? How can we use science and technology to restore the environment, and dismantle patriarchy in the service of people of all genders? What is the revolutionary struggle for freedom that does not rely on an appeal to mythological constructs of the natural?

In a reduction that may still serve as a useful contrast with Keith's reduction:

> ...Bookchin mentions an exhibit on the environment at the New York Museum of Natural History in the seventies that showed different types of pollution. The last exhibit, labeled "The Most Dangerous Animal on Earth", consisted simply of a mirror. Bookchin remembers a school teacher trying to explain the meaning of this particular feature of the exhibit to a black child who was standing in front of the mirror. It is irritating and irresponsible, Bookchin says, to blame that black child for the earth's pollution.

social ecology

Murray Bookchin was among the first white Americans to take environmental destruction seriously; his book about the issue was published just months before Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which met with far more popular success. An anarchist who came from a background of class and anti-fascist struggle, Bookchin saw eco-destruction as rooted in the social structures of hierarchy and domination: not stemming from civilization, as deep ecologists would have it, but traveling in company throughout history with patriarchy, racism, the state, capitalism, and homophobia. Where one exists, the others tend to develop; while this often happens within various civilizations, it is not limited to them. While Bookchin was highly critical of our current society and all of its destructive actions, he did not see the solution as the abolition of civilization, or a return to hunter-gatherer practices. Instead, he proposed the foundation of a new society based in the principles of anarchism: ecological and social equality through mutual aid. He called this philosophy *social ecology*.

Deep ecology departed from social ecology, and Bookchin had no tolerance for these disobedient children. He remained a lifelong fierce critic of deep ecologists, arguing that their tendency to blame civilization for all ills was both a willful blindness to types of societies that do not tend to create harm and a distraction from the actual forces at play. Never one to shy from social conflict, he routinely tangled with his colleagues in both environmental and anarchist circles, pointing out both their occasional tendencies towards fascism and frequent excursions into mysticism, which he found enragingly counterproductive. Nevertheless, Bookchin was the first to propose many of their shared basic tenets—for example, that the separation of humans from nature, and the subjugation of nature, led directly to the subjugation of some humans by others. As Janet Biehl, another social ecologist, puts it, in

a society oriented around the principles of social ecology, "humanity would cease to be divided against the nonhuman world—and against itself. Indeed, in free nature, human society would be nonhierarchical and cooperative. Society's 'completeness' would be based in the 'completeness' of humans in their self-fulfillment as rational, free, and self-conscious beings."

Bookchin also defended technology as a basically neutral tool, arguing that its destructive uses are a manifestation of the social forces in power, rather than something essential to technology itself. While he believed we ought to dramatically change our use of technology to live in ecological harmony, he thought technology was as potentially useful for liberation as it is for destruction and oppression. Indeed, Bookchin argued that modern technology has perhaps given humans a new advantage in practicing social ecology—in a technologically-enabled post-scarcity society, in which resources are distributed equally and according to need without the sorting system of capitalism and hierarchies, we will have more time for pro-social practices than ever before, liberated from the need to toil endlessly, yet able to live in structures other than hunter-gatherer societies. Bookchin tends to ignore the non-neutrality of currently-existing technologies, developed for capitalist interests and at best subverted for liberatory ends—but his point about the value of technologies developed by free societies stands, in my opinion. What could happen—what does happen, in salvage and ecologically-centered communities of exchange—when technology is developed from the standpoint of community provision and respect for other forms of life, rather than capitalist gain and resource exploitation?

Bookchin's position stems directly from anarchism. He argues that environmental destruction—while it is certainly facilitated by disrespect for non-human life—is rooted in economic demands, rather than in the pathology of western civilization that deep ecologists so passionately evoke. Certainly, living under the demands of capitalism, assimilating its hierarchies and the demands of power into our brains and hearts from the time we are small, might be described as a kind of pathology, one it might be impossible to recover from in one or many lifetimes. The same must be said of patriarchy, racism, and many other manifestations of essentialism that serve power. But Bookchin's analysis calls for us to change our social structures from where we stand today—in a way that realistically grapples with the needs of seven billion people—rather than urging us to "return to the wild": that is, for white Americans who can afford it to appropriate the lifeways of indigenous people who have already been murdered, colonized, and oppressed on a daily basis by a capitalist, racist society. He also speaks to the exciting possibilities

offered by urban societies where people of many cultural backgrounds intermingle: possibilities which are dear to my heart, but are apparently worse than meaningless to those who desire a return to the wild... presumably "naturally" segregated by location and lack of transportation. Both Bookchin and his opponents ignore the many centuries of indigenous movement and cultural exchange on several continents, a phenomena inconveniently neither urban nor misanthropic enough to suit either party.

Biehl takes an explicitly anti-essentialist stance in her critique of eco-feminism: "In reality, as distinguished from patriarchal mystifications, men and women are not ontological 'opposites.' They are, in fact, *differentiations* in humanity's potentiality to achieve a rich variegated whole." This standpoint points towards a celebration of multitudinous gendered difference, rather than the policing of gendered lines often found within deep ecology. Nor is it without a material-historical context: "If it is true that 'men make their own history, but they do not make it... under circumstances of their own choosing', as Marx once said, neither do women... We need the best faculties we have—our knowledge of nature, and the understanding of what we should be—rather than regressive myths of 'oneness' that carry us back to a past we should have long outgrown." Here, Biehl rejects the eco-feminist notion that the mythic past *should* unite us, thus homogenizing us and erasing difference, even if it *can*. "Admitting 'woman = nature' social structures that enforce patricentricity into a movement that calls itself feminist is a Trojan horse." She also offers a critique of consensus and an argument for democracy, as large-scale consensus often relies upon pre-existing power structures, unspoken coercion and the erasure of difference. Those who demand consensus, she says, create a "quasi-authoritarian imperative" that is certain to work against diversity and the preservation of dissent. This feeling is familiar to many of us who have participated in groups that use the consensus model, and is an important caution to those who advocate consensus as more than a tactic, as liberation itself. However, I do not find it a justification for the *explicit* tyranny of the majority under democracy.

While I feel far more affinity for social ecology's proposals than for those of the deep ecologists, it is not without problems. Bookchin and Biehl are both heavily nostalgic for the Athenian commons, the "birthplace of democracy." Neither offers an explicit critical analysis of that society's reliance in misogyny and slavery, although it perhaps underlies their belief that technology is necessary to give everyone the possibility of practicing democracy. Still, if so, it is a foundation that tends to legitimize misogyny and slavery as a necessity of the times, rather than portraying it as always unacceptable. Bookchin

and Biehl only rarely draw upon non-European societies for inspiration or examples of positive practices, and rely upon a progressivist idea of society, one that implies we are "evolving" out of animality and towards our fullest humanity —an unhelpfully linear conceptualization that, as voiced by white people living in twentieth-century America, is necessarily founded in racist colonization. Their very conception of politics as the most important human project tends to separate humans from the rest of the world—which itself serves to reactionarily *create* the "nature" called upon by deep ecologists, by contrast. This is despite their own critique of how the (usually gendered) separation of the private and public spheres of life—usually along gendered lines—was necessitated by the evolution of the Other, the stranger who could not be dealt with as family. They tend to argue that we must preserve democracy as the healthiest way of dealing with strangers, rather than abolishing strangeness by abolishing the opposite repressive structure: the family. As Biehl says, "...paradoxically, 'caring' is remarkably compatible with hierarchy. An ethic of motherly care thus does not by *itself* pose a threat to hierarchy and domination." With no strangers, no family, only people, how much harm in the world would disappear?

Furthermore, Bookchin's suggestion that we might be able to gradually evolve towards a free society via the practice of "libertarian municipalism" (a concept he developed late in his career) has been heavily attacked by other anarchists; anarchists tend not to believe in the possibility of gradual transformation, and often point to the betrayal of the Soviet state, which did anything but "fade away." Bookchin, at his worst, is longing for a return to a different kind of garden—not the Edenic matriarchal society of Derrick Jensen's fantasies, but the Athenian *polis*, without regard for the Athenian *oikos*—the household.

If we, as anarchists, are against the state and all forms of economy, we must destroy them both. We want neither enforced domestic labor without rights or recognition, nor citizenship, the human community meeting to debate while our society is held up by living caryatids. We demand something entirely different, something dirtier and more joyful.

misanthropic identification with nature
vs. the joy of the in/appropriate Other[j]

"Nature is for me, and I venture for many of us who are planetary foetuses gestating in the amniotic effluvia of terminal industrialism and militarism, one of those impossible things characterized... as that which we cannot desire."

—Donna Haraway

In a strange twist, the deep ecologist Lierre Keith famously argued that transgender people are impossible and offensive... from an anti-essentialist perspective.

> Gender is no different [from race]. It is a class condition created by a brutal arrangement of power. I can't fathom how mutilating people's bodies to fit an oppressive power arrangement is frankly anything but a human rights violation. And men insisting that they are women is insulting and absurd.
>
> There is no such thing as 'woman' or 'man' outside of patriarchal social relations. These are not biological conditions—they are socially created, by violence in the end. If I can't be a rich person born in a poor person's body, then I can't be a woman born in a man's body. Not unless you are going to argue that man and woman are biological or essential conditions. The whole point of feminism is that they are neither; gender is social to the roots, and those roots are soaked in women's blood.

So if Keith agrees that gender is a social construction, why can't it be fluid? Why must we be so married to the conditions we choose to resist—isn't class mobility faintly possible, and isn't class struggle a reality? Some trans people (often in the attempt to gain greater access to medical services and civil rights through appealing to the idea of transness as a medical condition) do frame things in biological terms—but they are outnumbered by those who see gender as a social construction, while biological essentialism is far more often a tool of transphobic cisfeminists. Keith is framing her transphobia as anti-essentialist only as a tactical gesture; by positing the strawman of biological gender as the basis of trans solidarity, she disallows for anti-essentialist trans-allied understandings. The organization with which Keith is affiliated, Deep Green Resistance, has the corresponding, possibly more offensive position

j The concept of the "in/appropriated other" is borrowed from Trinh Minh-ha's work *She, The Inappropriated Other*, via Haraway.

on their website:

> We are not "transphobic." We do, however, have a disagreement about what gender is. Genderists think that gender is natural, a product of biology. Radical feminists think gender is social, a product of male supremacy. Genderists think gender is an identity, an internal set of feelings people might have. Radical feminists think gender is a caste system, a set of material conditions into which one is born. Genderists think gender is a binary. Radical feminists think gender is a hierarchy, with men on top. Some genderists claim that gender is "fluid." Radical feminists point out that there is nothing fluid about having your husband sell your kidney. So, yes, we have some big disagreements... Radical feminists also believe that women have the right to define their boundaries and decide who is allowed in their space. We believe all oppressed groups have that right. We have been called transphobic because the women of DGR do not want men—people born male and socialized into masculinity—in women-only spaces. DGR stands with women in that decision.

Other parts of this statement also compare race and gender, arguing that as people cannot be transrace, they cannot be transgender. While I agree that race and gender are social constructions, the equation of the two is deeply offensive; as Rachel Dolezal has recently illustrated, there is a difference between being a welcome white person amidst a community of color and being a white person who pretends to be black. The abolition of raced difference in terms of social power relations is not the same as "being transracial." Those dynamics, as many trans people of color might speak to, work differently than those of gender; the two cannot be equated, and trying to draw parallels in this way is simply offensive. The point of oppressive social constructions is that the rules inherent within them may be disobeyed, are not necessarily followed by all those they are applied to. Few trans people with any sort of left political background would claim that gender fluidity means that we do not exist within patriarchy.

While Keith and her organization quickly lost currency in the radical environmentalist movement once their intense transphobia became evident, their essentialist ideas that simultaneously disregard and solidify aspects of difference continue to hold sway over many, even those who would not see themselves as transphobic. In particular, deep ecology's intentional de-emphasis of the individual and specific, in favor of generalizations about who bears blame and the interrelatedness of life, has paved the way for some fairly horrific extrapolations.

In assessing the damage humans have wrought upon the planet, some deep ecologists feel that it would be no great tragedy were humans to disappear, or for our numbers to be greatly reduced; they expect the earth to take steps to shed itself of its "excess" load of humans. This intentional, political misanthropy not only anthropomorphizes the earth, but tends to ignore the social and political implications of *which* humans will actually suffer from environmental collapse. It seems obvious that it will most affect the poor, brown, and disenfranchised... because of the overlapping social oppression co-created by the CEOs and politicians who are also wreaking environmental destruction. Those most directly responsible for such a collapse will most likely be safely ensconced in shelters and hideaways, and are in any case probably one of the numerically smallest populations in the world. This is the problem with taking notions of justice, responsibility, and humanity out of your politics—nature functions without human ethics, and when one centers nature's workings rather than one's own constructed ethics, one's politics become inhumane. Take this quote from National Park Service research biologist David Graber:[k]

> I know social scientists who remind me that people are a part of nature, but it isn't true. Somewhere along the line—at about a billion years ago, maybe half of that—we quit the contract and became a cancer. We have become a plague upon ourselves and upon the Earth. It is cosmically unlikely that the developed world will choose to end its consumption of fossil-energy consumption, and the Third World its suicidal consumption of landscape. Until such time as Homo sapiens should decide to rejoin nature, some of us can only hope for the right virus to come along.

Infamously, an article was once published in the *Earth First! Journal* arguing that AIDs was such a virus. Murray Bookchin took a stand against this:

> Not surprisingly, Earth First!, whose editor professes to be an enthusiastic deep ecologist, carried an article entitled "Population and AIDS" that advanced the obscene argument that AIDS is desirable as a means of population control. This was no spoof. It was carefully worked out, fully reasoned in a Paleolithic sort of way, and earnestly argued. Not only will AIDS claim large numbers of lives, asserts the author (who hides behind the pseudonym "Miss Ann Thropy," a form of black humor that could also pass as an example of macho-male arrogance), but it "may cause a breakdown in technology [read: human food supply] and its export which could also decrease human population" (May 1, 1987). These

k He bears no relationship to the anthropologist David Graeber.

> people feed on human disasters, suffering, and misery, preferably in Third World countries where AIDS is by far a more monstrous problem than elsewhere.

Bookchin's point is well-taken—privileged Americans are most comfortable with mass death when it affects those with whom they do not emotionally relate, distanced by color, location, or sexual orientation. AIDs, by and by large, does not impact those who are most at fault for environmental destruction. While this article was intensely disclaimed by the majority of deep ecologists after Bookchin's critique (Bookchin also met with a huge pushback from the ecological movement, which hastened his departure from radical politics), it cannot be written off as a one-time aberration. This is one of the ways that eco-fascism begins: the naturalistic justification of death is not different from ethnic cleansing, from social Darwinism, from any of it. Rather than seeing humans, our society, our technology, and our destructive impact upon the rest of the world as something that is happening within nature—still something that should be stopped and opposed, for our sakes as much as for the sake of everything else—we are made alien from it, we are Othered, made a disease that must be eradicated by another disease. This line of thought must be stopped; and the idea of making the planet healthier by our absence or "return" to some *before* is obviously similar to Volkische ideology. Misanthropy and crypto-fascism are no solution.

A basic assumption of deep ecologists at play in these misanthropic deindividualizations is that our alienation can be solved via a disclaiming of human creations and a (re)identification with the natural. "An increase in identification with other beings correspondingly involves a decrease in alienation from them. Identification with other beings also means the process of defining one's needs as their needs, one's interests as their interests... It means, Naess says, assuming solidarity with beings other than oneself in an ever-widening circle." In contrast, Donna Haraway would argue that an increase in identification means an increase in alienation because it relies upon a false mystification to be like yourself. While Bookchin offers a practical-political alternative to deep ecology, I feel that Haraway offers a superior—and magical, delightful, engaging—theoretical-political perspective.

A scientist in the field of primatology as well as a feminist and sci-fi enthusiast, Haraway is best known for her work "The Cyborg Manifesto", which presents the metaphor of the cyborg as a way to understand our constructed, irreverent, perverse selves. But her project is larger than that; Haraway describes "queering nature" as her "categorical imperative." At

stake for all of us, she says, is finding or creating "*inhabitable* narratives about science and nature." To do this in a way that does not reinforce oppressive narratives, we must put aside our traditional, reactionary perceptions of difference for greater nuance:

> I do not know of any other time in history when there was greater need for political unity to confront effectively the dominations of "race", "gender", "sexuality", and "class." I also do not know of any other time when the kind of unity we might help build could have been possible. None of "us" have any longer the symbolic or material capability of dictating the shape of reality to "them." Or at least "we" cannot claim innocence from practicing such dominations. White women, including socialist feminists, discovered (i.e., were forced kicking and screaming to notice) the non-innocence of the category "woman." That consciousness changes the geography of all previous categories; it denatures them as heat denatures a fragile protein. Cyborg feminists have to argue that "we" do not want any more natural matrix of unity and that no construction is whole. Innocence, and the corollary insistence on victimhood as the only ground for insight, has done enough damage. But the constructed revolutionary subject must give late-twentieth-century people pause as well. In the fraying of identities and in the reflexive strategies for constructing them, the possibility opens up for weaving something other than a shroud for the day after the apocalypse that so prophetically ends salvation history.

Haraway's project is not one of misanthropic, apocalyptic doom, nor of reforming society into something healthier—i.e., something more *functionally* and less *discernibly* oppressive. Rather, she argues that, far from the simplistic identification Naess calls for, we must learn to do empathy—and solidarity—without identification. Once we admit that we are all aliens to each other, quite apart from the distance created by social constructs like raced and gendered difference, we can begin to grow true empathy. The very idea of Nature produces alienation, let alone the argument that humans and our civilizations exist outside it. Following Edward Said: "The separate, objective world—non-social nature—is a career. Nature legitimates the scientist's career, as the Orient justifies the representational practices of the Orientalist, even as precisely "Nature" and "the Orient" are the *products* of the constitutive practice of scientists and orientalists."

Haraway calls for empathetic communication based on the acknowledgment of difference not only between humans, but also between humans and animals. Once we understand our difference, we can begin to communicate in ways other than violence. "Disarmed of the fantasy of climbing into heads, one's own or others', to get the full story from the inside, we can make some multispecies semiotic progress. To claim not to be able to communicate with and to know one another and other critters, however imperfectly, is a denial of mortal entanglements (the open) for which we are responsible and in which we respond." Haraway's approach stands in stark contrast to the anthropomorphized naturalization of "the wild" and our place in it performed by so many deep ecologists. Instead, she calls for the introduction of "dissensus" via the character of the "in/appropriated other" —the one who is not placed and given belonging in community by their acknowledgment of difference, but who cannot pretend comfort or naturalness anywhere, ever, much less defend the boundaries of that (eventually inevitable) terrible community. The "productive conflict" of the insider-outsider perspective—double consciousness—can give us more helpful perspective in our decision-making about how to relate to each other and to our world than any kind of assertions of authenticity, naturalness, and belonging. Rather than being "originally fixed by difference", such a perspective helps us map where the "effects of difference appear."

Haraway mixes the ideas of Trinh Minh-ha, Chela Sandoval, and many other theorists of color who have worked with concepts of Otherness and oppositional consciousness with her particular blend of science fiction, Marxism, and feminism. She playfully/seriously suggests that we can seize the means of production even when the product in question is ourselves. In example:

> Sally Hacker... suggested the term "pornotechnics" to refer to the embodiment of perverse power relations in the artifactual body. Hacker insisted that the heart of pornitechnics is the military as an institution, with its deep roots and wide reach into science, technology, and erotics.... Technics and erotics are the cross hairs in the focusing device for scanning fields of skill and desire... Drawing from Hacker's work, I believe that control over technics is the enabling practice for class, race, and gender supremacy. Realigning the join of technics and erotics must be at the heart of anti-racist feminist practice.

This is the kind of argument levied by the science fiction writers she admires, such as Octavia Butler and Samuel Delany, who are seen within the academy

as non-serious theoreticians by virtue of both their creative work and status as people of color. Haraway, herself not given the due her academic peers receive, dares to take their suggestions around the possibilities of redemptive technology seriously. In fact, Haraway sees science fiction as "concerned with the interpenetration of boundaries between problematic selves and unexpected others" —useful for precisely the project of complication she desires. She calls for us to *write the world*, to reject the material/semiotic divide around bodies and see our lived experience as a semiotic process. "Objects like bodies do not pre-exist as such. Similarly, 'nature' cannot pre-exist as such, but neither is its existence ideological. Nature is a commonplace and a powerful discursive construction, effected in the interactions among material-semiotic actors, human and not."

Haraway defines "nature" as both a topic and as a trope; that is, a fictional construction used by humans to sort and define meaning, both in commonplace and existential questions. Therefore, the "technological decontextualization" (alienation) that affects humans and the rest of the world emotionally/physically is not a disaffection from nature, as the deep ecologists would have it, but a "*particular production of nature*:" commodity production. She argues that, rather than affirming "nature" as a non-constructed artifact—which can only serve to underline and reinforce its exploitation in an exploitative social context—we ought to deconstruct the alleged rationality of science, the sameness of transcendental naturalism, and "refigure the actors in the ethnospecific categories of nature *and* culture."

Later in the same essay, Haraway explores a particular problematic use of these ethnospecific categories by a capitalist interest. She analyzes a poster produced by Gulf Oil, which shows an image of the clasped hands of a chimp and Jane Goodall, a white British primatologist. The text of the poster called for increasing human understanding of nature… which serves both to conceal the eco-destruction caused by Gulf and its confederates, and to blame it on human alienation from nature rather than on economic interests. Haraway observes that the image Gulf chose for this poster *erases* non-white interactions with animals and rest of the world while *affirming* a positive image of the destroyers of those people and that world. The existence of black Africans living in Tanzania, where Goodall was studying chimps, was completely erased, and the white relationship to "nature" was renewed, affirmed, and sanctioned as if by a Saturday's trip to the zoo—all as part of the project of cleansing Gulf Oil's image. Haraway: "The white hand will be the instrument for saving nature—and in the process be saved from a rupture with nature. Closing great gaps, the transcendentals of nature and society meet here in the metonymic figure of

softly embracing hands from two worlds, whose innocent touch depends upon the absence of the 'other world', the 'third world', where the drama actually transpires."

Haraway is celebrated by transhumanists and ignored by most others; no doubt the deep ecologists and radical feminists she antagonizes are making the wisest choice they can in pretending that she isn't speaking. But she refuses to be categorized as an irrelevant post-structuralist, or as a scientist who does not really care for the earth, or as a feminist who is not interested in the "hard" sciences: "I am neither a naturalist, nor a social constructionist. Neither-nor. This is not social constructionism, and it is not technoscientific, or biological determinism. It is not nature. It is not culture. It is truly about a serious historic effort to get elsewhere"—not merely to survive via the exhausted tropes of essentialist or the "routinized gestures"of identity politics. Haraway says that her purpose is to "write theory: i.e., to produce a patterned vision of how to move and what to fear in the topography of an impossible but all-too-real present, in order to find an absent, but perhaps possible, other present." Grebowicz and Merrick expand this to mean, via science fiction, "attempts to imagine—within the nexus of Western militarized technoscience (the "belly of the monster", Haraway says)—different ways to "do gender, sexuality, and race that do not entail a "return to the garden" or the evocation of noninnocent origins."

Moreover, her relationship to technology and the future is utterly different from that of the Italian Futurists, who encouraged misogyny and disdain for the world in the name of futurity and speed. Haraway instead encourages us to sink into our relationship to the world as it currently exists, to think with care of our futures, but to reject the sort of hubris that envisions utopia in the past or future. Far from seeking to identify and elevate the Ubermensch, her project is fundamentally opposed to hierarchies of all kinds. Just as deep ecology mirrors the Volkische fascination with blood and land, the technohumanists of today tend to mirror the Futurist glorification of ever-increasing speed through inherently violent exploitations of humans and our environments. Donna Haraway offers an important anti-fascist alternative.

Haraway's colleague Anna Tsing studied the matsutake mushroom and the people who pick it as a case study of our hidden realities now and future possibilities. Tsing's project took place in what she calls "the limit spaces of capitalism, neither properly inside nor outside, where the inability of capitalist discipline to fully capture the world is especially obvious." These limit spaces occurred amidst "ruined" landscapes, and involved a non-native fungus and often displaced or migrant humans. Her goal is deceptively simple: "In this

time of diminished expectations, I look for *disturbance-based ecologies in which many species sometimes live together without either harmony or conquest.*"

Tsing found that some habitats, such as those in which matsutake grow, need human disturbance—something more chaotic and diverse than Western management practices. She describes the Japanese satoyama woodlands as such an environment: "To restore woodlands for matsutake encourages a suite of other living things: pines and oaks, understory herbs, insects, birds. Restoration requires disturbance—but disturbance to enhance diversity and the healthy function of ecosystems. Some kinds of ecosystems, advocates argue, flourish with human activities." This gives the lie to the essentialist mysticism that sees humans as the always-destroyers, the disturbers and wreckers of nature, always outside invaders. Though many of our activities certainly function that way, we are not separate from nature, but always part of its conversation. Moreover, the matsutake pickers are a diverse array of humans both emerging from and living in non-ideal conditions for a vast series of social reasons. Tsing says we can learn from this: "[I]f we want to know what makes places livable we should we should be studying polyphonic assemblages, gatherings of ways of being." She also argues that we should be studying the abilities of forests to come back, stronger than ever. "In the contemporary world, we know how to block resurgence. But this hardly seems a good enough reason to stop noticing its possibilities."

We need to understand these ways of living because we exist in a constant state of *precarity*. "Precarity is the condition of being vulnerable to others. Unpredictable encounters transform us; we are not in control, even of ourselves. Unable to rely on a stable structure of community, we are thrown into shifting assemblages, which remake us as well as our others... Indeterminacy, the unplanned nature of time, is frightening, but thinking through precarity makes it evident that indeterminacy also makes life possible." Fascism might be defined as *the political solution offered by anxiety to a sense of precarity*—so if we are anti-fascists, and yet live in the same world as everyone else, we must find new, less artificially-deadening, solutions to our physical, emotional, and social survival.

"Freedom is the negotiation of ghosts on a haunted landscape; it does not exorcise the haunting but works to survive and negotiate it with flair." By this, Tsing means the ghosts of pickers who have died, of Native Americans murdered for land; but also the ghostly functions of power haunting the picking environment. "If pickers have trouble sorting out which kinds of land are off-limits, they are not alone in their confusion. The difference between the two kinds of confusion is instructive. The Forest Service is asked to uphold *property*,

even if it means neglecting the *public*. The pickers do their best to hold property in abeyance as they pursue a commons haunted by the possibility of their own exclusion." Or the ghosts come with the pickers themselves: "When pickers talk about what shaped their lives, including their mushroom picking, most talk about surviving war. They are willing to brave the considerable dangers of the matsutake forest because it extends their living survival of war, a form of haunted freedom that goes everywhere with them." Within pickers who are white veterans of the U.S.-Indochina War, there is a "distinct mixture of resentment and patriotism, trauma and threat. War memories are simultaneously disturbing and productive in forming this niche. War is damaging, they tell us, but it also makes men. Freedom can be found in war as well as against war." Contrariwise, for the Cambodian and Hmong pickers who have experienced war, the forest can become a place of peace, healing, and community.

It is economic thinking, Tsing argues, that has made the assumption of self-containment possible. The fact that it cannot possibly be true in practice—that no individual can be a standard unit, that social relationships are not scalable—has produced the environmental collapse we see and the fear we feel of collaboration, of contamination. But since complex diversity is all around us, Tsing asks, "Why don't we use these stories in how we know the world? One reason is that contaminated diversity is complicated, often ugly, and humbling. Contaminated diversity implicates survivors in histories of greed, violence, and environmental destruction. The tangled landscape grown up from corporate logging reminds us of the irreplaceable graceful giants that came before. The survivors of war remind us of the bodies they climbed over—or shot—to get to us. We don't know whether to love or hate these survivors. Simple moral judgments don't come to hand." Tsing poses this tactical question: "Can we keep sight of the continuing hegemony of scalability projects while immersing ourselves in the forms and tactics of precarity?" How can we fight and live and love in a world that is not a situation comedy?

And so Tsing argues that we ought to acknowledge the contamination, collaboration, and precarity around us, the complex, particular, and shifting assemblages of interaction that compose life and death. This is simply more realistic, according to many scientists, who have invented the term "symbiopoiesis" to refer to the co-evolution of species, arguing that nature selects surviving *relationships* rather than individuals. Tsing's focus on the dialogue between scientific and cultural explanations of the landscape, contradictions intact, challenges the idea of a "monolithic science that digests all practices into a single agenda. Instead," she says, "I offer stories built through layers of disparate practices of knowing and being." It is not the most secure means of understanding the world, but it may be the most useful.

"...the lurking dilemma in all of these tales is comprehensive homelessness, the lack of a common place, and the devastation of public culture."

—Donna Haraway

Lierre Keith argues that the Wandervogel of pre-Nazi Germany were nearly identical to the hippies of the 1960s United States. The problem, she says, is that both were alternative rather than oppositional cultures. "The differences between an alternative and an oppositional culture have been present for centuries. It's a split to the root between the Romantics and the resistance. Both start with a rejection of some part of the social order, but they identify their enemy differently, and from there they head in opposite directions." But her critique of the Wandervogel is more specific than acknowledging their status as an alternative, non-oppositional movement: "The Romantic Movement and the Wandervogel created an image of The Peasant as an authentic, antirational symbol, as people close to nature. This is where we get the peasant blouses, which are still with us. The Wandervogel's idea of a peasant had nothing to do with actual peasants, who did exist in Germany at the time and could have used some solidarity."

I am not sure how one could study, as Keith seems to have done, the Wandervogel or the German Romantic movement without learning about their clear, documented, indisputable ties to proto-fascism[1], to which she never refers, not even to disclaim them. I would hate to accuse even such a transphobe of being a crypto-fascist, so I would like to assume she simply did not read very deeply. However, Keith's critique of the Wandervogel for failing to show solidarity to the German peasantry is a rather shockingly explicit nod to their successors, "the resistance", who did found their politics around "solidarity to the German peasantry"—the National Socialist party. The Nazi line was theorized forward from the Volkische ideology, founded in German Romanticism and practiced within the Wandervogel and associated movements, that believed in the essential connection between the German peasant and their countryside; the parasitism of the moneylending Jew upon the German peasant; and the necessity of cleansing Germany of both the Jew and the urban modernity that, they argued, threatened this precious German peasant. While they were not explicitly fascist, or always anti-Semitic, this conversation

1 The Wandervogel preceded the rise of the National Socialist party by around 30 years. While some chapters contained Jewish members and led to Zionist youth clubs, German nationalism and anti-Semitism were prevailing attitudes. They evolved into the German youth movement, which in turn fostered many Nazi officials, and later the Hitler Youth.

and cultural practice was the stage upon which the evolution of German fascism took place. In this light, whatever ineffectual benign wandering and alternative lifestyles the Wandervogel pursued rather than showing "solidarity with the German peasantry" is entirely to their credit! Keith is here playing a very dangerous and disturbing game.

However, she is not alone; Keith is simply more honest than her companions, or possibly not clever enough to cloak her fascist tendencies in layers of mystification. The call to source one's authenticity through tropes similar to the German peasant—in the U.S., the white small farmer preferred by the right, or the "Noble Savage" caricature of Native Americans favored by the Left—is felt strongly by many. We form narratives of ourselves and our right to exist where and when we are vis-à-vis an Other, and must legitimate them by asserting our ancestral ties to a place, our inherent superiority as a race or a gender, and/or the historicity of our spirituality, ideology, or lifeway. This is a particularly strong imperative for those whose "right" *seems* supported by society, but is lowkey always-already in question: insecure white people whose ancestors obviously did not originate upon the North American continent, people of color who live in a globalized society away from their points of origin and whose legitimacy is constantly interrogated by society, and so on. These narratives do not necessarily lead to fascism, and are often found among those who tend to become its victims. However, I believe these narratives are necessary to fascism—that it is nearly impossible, perhaps completely impossible, to fight for the fascist ideal without founding your belief in your right to existence on historical imaginaries that tend to negate the belonging of others. This is why I feel critical of even underdog narratives of historicity, identity and belonging, though they will never be as dangerous as those recited by the ones who hold the power of veridiction.

Bookchin deals with this problem largely by ignoring it; he is so privileged because his philosophy, mindset, and lifeways are drawn from the white, Western tradition he benefits from, lionizes in his writing, and yet intends, however uncritically, to rebel against. Keith and Jensen validate their struggle by referring again and again to the lifeways of various indigenous peoples; though they are both (as far as I know) not indigenous, they seem to feel little shame or concern about appropriation in doing so. Haraway speaks of it often, as in the quote that opens this section, but lightly, as a part of her general quest to queer our relationship to our surroundings, to challenge the tropes we allow to dominate our lives. I will turn to Sara Ahmed for another angle on how we might reject the urge to draw lines of descent for legitimacy, and instead queer our relationship to the land, to our pasts, and to tropes like the right to belong.

In her book *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed takes seriously the use of the word "orientation" within the term "sexual orientation." How are we oriented in our relationships to our physical surroundings, as well as to our lovers? Things that are "straight" are "in line", aligned with other lines. Remembering the older use of the word "queer" to mean "odd, off-kilter, out of place, or suspicious," queer orientations are those that do not correspond to other lines, that veer off into unexpected territory. Queerness is, at once, an identity, an attribute, and a feature of a body—not necessarily the product of a "malfunctioning" gene or odd mix of hormones in the womb, but still a lived, bodily experience. It is also, to continue with the idea of lines, a trajectory. One can be gay, bisexual, or transgender and not live with queer intentionality, and the queer realm is not limited to those who are "authentically" gay, bisexual, or trans. Just as we can *queer*, in the verb form—to make strange, suspicious, unexpected—our relationships to others, so we may queer our relationship to the rest of the world. If we use narratives of authenticity and place to find a sense of belonging, familiarity, and comfort—to orient ourselves—we can also choose to *disorient* ourselves, to take the power and danger of precarity into our own hands.

Ahmed's guiding metaphor, following Heidegger and many others, is that of a table: a physical table, perhaps a dining room table. I am intrigued by her use of a Hannah Arendt quote: "To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it." This relates to us in a three-fold manner: as those who share a world of things that are dying (due to ecological collapse and other social ills); as those whom, I hope, are interested in holding it in common, in living *together* in the world; and as anti-fascists, as Arendt was in her lifetime and work. We relate to each other by and through things, as one does across a table; to do so, we must first turn them into things in our mind. Arendt, and Bookchin with her, might only imagine humans at the table; the deep ecologists would want to seat animals, plants, and other living things; and Haraway would perhaps wonder why we are limiting ourselves, and invite technological and fantastical beings into the mix as well. So be it: we are at a table consisting of *whatever is not seated around it*, according to our guiding biases. How do we queer our relationship to the table?

Ahmed remarks on the tendency to privilege hetereosexual couples and lines of descent around the family table. Beginning here with humans, then, I propose queering our relationships to each other: honoring the happy tangled mess of child-parent relationships when a wide set of adults care for them; celebrating the overlapping multiplicity of friendship rather than the duality of partnership;

coming together in affinity, built upon the celebration of difference, rather than in enforced and assumed sameness. Next, we will invite the guests of the deep ecologists, but (my table, my rules) we will play by Haraway's guidelines: we will begin to learn about animals, plants, and others by first acknowledging that we are as completely different from them as we are from each other. We will not assert the primacy of nature or any other human tropes, and we will deliberately undo those tropes each time we encounter them in ourselves, with great intention. Finally, we will invite the tropes and the technologies themselves to sit down, and we will relate to them in as unexpected and suspicious a way as we know how.

By the end of this process, there are no things; there is no table. We no longer are relating to each other through *things* (in capitalist terms) or even through the *ideas of things*. We are a set of relationships, an ecology, but also individual and particular points of joy. If we can see each other, the living things around us, and even our ideas directly, in cheerful acknowledgement of the impossibility of seeing clearly without altering what we look at with the lens of our gaze, we will be so busy delightedly trying to understand that we will simply not have time to re-adhere to narratives of who belongs where, and why. We will be playing the game of being alive as if we had never learned about power.

But this line of thought is impossibly utopian... where the "impossible" is understood as that which cannot be solidly categorized as real, but is experienced accidentally in fragments. Power permeates our lives. To materially queer our relationship to the land is deeply necessary; while I believe in the value of these discussions to our material struggle, they could never replace it. The semiotic must inform the material, and vice versa, and immediately so. For example, as someone who experiences white privilege in the United States, who lives on occupied territory whether in the city, the country or "the wilderness", it is necessary for me to take indigenous struggle seriously. This necessity is not founded in a desire to legitimate my existence here as a guest of Native Americans; nor to affirm the narrative of Native American closeness to nature; nor to ease my guilt about the horrifying history of the last 500 years on this continent; nor to learn indigenous "natural" lifeways. Rather, it is founded in a desire for solidarity based on affinity through difference to respond to our current bloody realities.

Speaking of the wilderness, Haraway reminds us that "[o]nly after the dense indigenous populations—numbering from six to twelve million in 1492—had been sickened, enslaved, killed, and otherwise displaced from along the rivers could Europeans represent Amazonia as "empty" of culture, as

"nature," or, in later terms, as a purely "biological" entity." The creation of nature is bloody, and it is taking place today in the same and nearby regions (as well as many others) at the expense of the surviving descendants of the original bloodbath. The development takes place along a spectrum from oil extraction—a brutal, obvious, polluting, land-clearing and home-evicting process—to eco-tourism, the kinder and gentler intervention that still evicts families, destroys traditional ways of life, and disrupts local ecologies. Green capitalism: two for the price of one.

While struggles against these forces accept help from outsiders, they are deeply engaged in their own project; more visitors are probably not the solution. However, white occupation and indigenous struggle are real in every area; even if one's locale is no longer the bleeding edge of development, there are still indigenous communities in most areas who accept solidarity, and they evoke immediate questions. How does recognizing the primacy of indigenous sovereignty interact with the overlapping oppressions and privileges of occupiers? How does this question relate to the anti-essentialist postmodern proposals of which I am fond? How does one avoid becoming Derrick Jensen, or doing nothing at all? I think that remembering Haraway's lesson about building real relationships through the acknowledgement and celebration of difference, and the firm rejection of essentialism, will serve those embarked in the project of indigenous solidarity, among many other projects of liberations, better than the philosophies advocated by deep ecologists. Primarily, as always, we will learn through practice.

different presents

We live in a time in which many white Americans want to return to the land. It is also a time in which the indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica, along with people in many other regions of the world, are being forced out of their homes and lifeways by state repression serving the capitalist interests who suck profit out of that landscape... to profit, directly or via third-hand consumption, the white Americans who want to go back to the land. How is the white liberal desire to return to the land, to retreat from the heterogeneity of the city and the possibilities of transformation and cross-pollination there, similar to the fascist desire for return? What role does whiteness play in each, and what do these movements mean for those of us who are not white—what will they do to us this time? How can we generate livable futures rather dwell in fantasies of return that ignore (or celebrate, in the case of fascists) their own dependency on death? How do we access Haraway's "other present" for more than a moment?

Capitalism and the state, hierarchy and domination are the roots of all these forces. To learn how to combat them within our hearts and within our lives, and to show solidarity to others doing the same, is the project. First steps include destroying the idea of the Other, of sameness, of return, and of an essential relationship to place; celebrating difference and precarity, trying with delight to communicate across distance; and, most of all, staying in motion and *becoming*, rejecting the paranoia of stasis and the false security of being.

Haraway, in a material-semiotic approach answer to naturalism, talks about how contact zones between humans and other animals are difficult spaces, and therefore zones of responsibility; if done correctly, with attention and great responsibility, the human participant exits not wholly human, not wholly themselves. The heterogeneity of the other keeps all positioning subject to revision. This is the basis of the ethics of companionship: it is because the other becomes the stranger over and over that negotiation is necessary. There is an impossibility of deciding between difference and sameness before each event of contact—and that is good, because it makes us see our degrees of difference as degrees of relation rather than otherness. This is the project between humans and animals, and humans and humans, I wish to see in the world. This is the lesson I want to learn from listening to the land. This is the cyborg I would rather be than any goddess.

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...the lurking dilemma in all of these tales is comprehensive homelessness, the lack of a common place, and the devastation of public culture...

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The Unquiet Dead

Anarchism, Fascism, and Mythology

5. The Masked Goddess: Self-Invention and Becoming

'Effective' history, however, deals with events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations. An event, consequently, is not a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle, but the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a masked 'other.'"

from "Nietzsche, Geneaology, History"
by Michel Foucault

In the last section, I critiqued the tendency of some white feminists to create an allegedly positive definition of an oppressed class that carves the boundaries of that oppression upon the bodies of those who "cannot possibly" have experienced suffering. I want to next celebrate some positive efforts towards spiritual and feminist practice, reclamations of culture pasts, and interrogations of subjectivity: the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, Audre Lorde, and, briefly, Saidiya Hartman. These writers, through their experiences of liminality and exclusion, create space for solidarity and mutual struggle through a shared recognition of diverse pain.

Next, we will think through the problems and successes of the struggle for access to spiritual resources by Aboriginal prisoners in Canada. Finally, we will think through a call for oppressed peoples' cultural nationalism, as well as a critique of post-structuralism that proposes essentialism as a source of power for disenfranchised people. I reply via the work of Jasbir Puar, who calls for *assemblages* over *intersections*. Throughout this section, I meet my complaints about white cis feminists' tendency to focus upon the white cis female body by interspersing a little poetry and poetics from some gender-variant people of color about their bodily experiences.

While I wish to prioritize the work of people of color in this section, I opened with a Michel Foucault quote, and I will close with the same. I am interested in the kind of history he describes—not a dry history of events, but a genealogy of power relations and their reversals. This reversal he describes, the "entry of the masked other", is a dynamic and poignant moment within struggle—one that can be used by fascism to justify its battle to destroy the Other, and one that can be used by the Other (no longer other, but now just oneself) to fuel struggle. My interest here is in how the latter can be performed in a nuanced way, one that refuses to guard itself with character armor, or tp take up power within the terms of hierarchical society, while still creating space for *becoming*[a], for movement, for social conflict against oppression. How can we, as disenfranchised people, recognize ourselves as actors without becoming subjects—and is this even desirable?

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a Becoming will be discussed throughout this section. For a detailed exploration of the topic, see Giorgio Agamben's *The Open.*

I. self-invention

> Wittig's lesbian body is blood and pain and dirt. Kathy Acker's queer body is "fiery storms and other catastrophic phenomena." Mine is more soreness, longing and the inexplicable...
> I know the risks, that domestic biosecurity forces in masks may show up at the doorsteps of pirates and those who would create their own autonomous networks of information, but to struggle for a world where people can change their bodies freely, the risk is worth it. We have to find ways to move freely while being motion captured, to imagine bodily insurrection through monstrous forms while swimming in images of perfect statuesque bodies with ideal features magnified to grotesque proportions. Everywhere around me is the image of the perfect body, but I want to exploit the medical system to give me an assortment of parts that is unimaginable and unnamable. I decided along the way that I want to have this body and this life outside of the names I used to have for myself, and now I have it.
>
> "Becoming Transreal", Micha Cárdenas

> I am profoundly inspired by the intersectional work of women of color feminists such as [Audre] Lorde and Gloria Anzaldúa. Perhaps my poetics have been shaped by a life lived in many borderlands, from my birthplace of Miami, a water borderland, to the US/Mexico border of San Diego/Tijuana, where I lived when I wrote most of these poems, to Los Angeles, a site of constant movement and migration where I live now. I find poetic writing to be a space where I can mix many layers of experience and ideas together and allow a flexible slippage between them.
>
> "Statement on Poetics", Micha Cárdenas

Cárdenas draws a lyrical portrait of what it means for one's own quotidian bodily experiences to be unacceptable, and therefore to live in resistance. In her statement on poetics, she pays genealogical homage to the "borderland" work done by Lorde and Anzaldúa, and her own material experience of living at the edges. These two examples of her work frame our exploration of the contingent futures offered by those who have never been allowed to unproblematically dwell within the dominant paradigm.

In her book *Self-Invention in Paula Gunn Allen, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Audre Lorde*, AnaLouise Keating argues that these three authors transgress the boundaries of both race and gender, conflictually performing multiple identities in the process of re/creating themselves personally, spiritually, and politically. "As they borrow from and rewrite precolonial belief systems, they simultaneously expose the limitation in existing definitions of ethnic, gender, and sexual identity and invent open-ended alternatives." They create an "embodied metaphysics" out of their lived material experiences that escapes the essentialism and duality that white feminists often reinforce. Keating depicts Allen's reinterpretations of Native ritual traditions, Anzaldúa's *mestiza* consciousness, and Lorde's self-re/invention via West African worldviews as forms of feminist spirituality that tend to conflict with the forces of misogyny and white supremacy. Their work shares the following themes.

difference

These authors tend to celebrate difference. Keating thinks this is because they all inhabit multiple identities simultaneously; to generalize this claim, Keating quotes Lourdes Torres' review of various Latina autobiographies: "The radicalness of the project lies in the authors' refusal to accept any one position; rather, they work to acknowledge the contradictions in their lives and to transform differences into a source of power. They find being marginalized by multiple discourses, and existing in a borderland, compels them to reject prescriptive positions and instead leads them to create radical personal and collective identities." This self-basis does not undermine their theoretical work, as feminists tend to agree that the personal is political; one's own experiences are the most direct source possible.

Keating sources this approach in the very feminist nature of these authors' mythmaking; "consequently, the new meanings they create deconstruct conventional western gender categories, as well as cultural systems of difference." While this strikes me as a "natural" consequence of writing from a feminist perspective, not everyone finds it so—we have already reviewed how often white cis feminists found it "natural" to reinscribe gendered difference in their writing. But Paula Gunn Allen described her necessary relationship to liminality—living on the border—as an outgrowth of her identity: "In an 1990 interview with Jane Caputi she associates her lesbianism with her Native American worldview and explains that "perversity (transformationality)... constitutes the sacred moment, the process of changing from one condition to another—*lifelong* liminality." Within this worldview, liminality, difference, the inessential, is centered as sacred rather than problematized as exceptional; the Other is yourself, over and over again, which makes the violent process

of Othering those not yourself rather impossible.

Celebrating difference without oppressively inscribing it takes many forms. There is the basically necessary intervention, made by these authors but also by many others, of theorizing a meaning of *woman* that is not founded solely in white experience, and of pointing out this failure in the work of others. In her "Open Letter to Mary Daly", Audre Lorde asks why, in her book *Gyn/Ecology*, Daly drew her Goddess figures only from Greco-Roman mythology. Lorde opens: "With a moment of space in this wild and bloody spring, I wanted to speak the words I have had in mind for you." This is a reference to the murders of twelve black women in the Boston area during that time—a pointed contextualization of Lorde's critique within the actual violence that racism like Daly's tends to perpetuate. Lorde continues, "I wondered... why are her goddess images only white, western european, judeo-christian? ...Well, I thought, Mary has made a conscious decision to narrow her scope and to deal only with the ecology of western european women. Then I came to the first three chapters of your Second Passage, and it was obvious you were dealing with noneuropean women, but only as victims and preyers-upon each other. I began to feel my history and my mythic background distorted by the absence of any images of my foremothers in power." While Daly might have defended herself from Lorde's critique by saying that she confined herself only to speaking within her knowledge base, Lorde points out that Daly *was* talking about women of color, but absent a presentation of their cultural contexts and spiritual predecessors. This sort of unconscious bias and ignorance on Daly's part is an example of the ways in which the white gaze tends to cut non-white subjects from history and paste them into a white landscape.

After incisively, painfully dissecting Daly's racism, its impact upon women generally, and upon Lorde herself, Lorde appeals:

> I ask that you be aware of how this serves the destructive forces of racism and separation between women... When patriarchy dismisses us, it encourages our murderers. When radical lesbian feminist theory dismisses us, it encourages its own demise. ...Mary, I ask that you remember what is dark and ancient and divine within yourself that aids your speaking. As outsiders, we need each other for support and connection and all the other necessities of living on the borders. But, in order to come together we must recognize each other. Yet I feel that since you have so completely un-recognized me, perhaps I have been in error concerning you and no longer recognize you.

This remark burns to the heart of the conflict: the blurriness of coercive homogeneity that breeds alienation, versus the recognition of difference that creates the possiblilty of connection.

While many cis white feminist authors, even if lesbian-identified, could not seem to help but push essentialist hate through their appeal to the feminine Divine, Audre Lorde shows us another way. When she describes "becoming Afrekete" in her autobiographical novel, *Zami*, she is drawing in large part upon the Yoruban/Fon God/dess Eshu/Legba. This figure is multiply-gendered, masculine and feminine at the same time: *essentially liminal*, if you will. Keating proposes that Lorde here evades the dualistic replacement of God the Father with Goddess the Mother performed by Daly, and even that made by Luce Irigaray (a more sympathetic figure than Daly by far.) Anzaldúa, too, reclaims the slur *mita' y mita*' (half and half) to describe the queer dweller within the Borderland: "half and half: both woman and man, *neither*, a new gender." This is an interesting counterpoint to the white second-wave assertion of the essential difference of the woman-oriented woman, and is instead somewhat like Monique Wittig's description of the free human as someone outside the gendered paradigm of the heterosexual patriarchy. Like Wittig, Anzaldúa argues that patriarchal constructions of gender imprison men as well as women; she opposes the binary reinforcements of gendered division that so many other feminists seem determined to affirm.

The question of the difference of bodies has proved a tricky one for anti-essentialist materialist feminists—but it needn't. Keating asks, "[C]an we simply ignore the female body and, by extension, the fact that women's bodily experiences have been controlled, defined, and marginalized by specific cultural ideologies? ...Can we write (about) women's gender-specific bodily experiences without reinstating male/female dichotomies?" Certainly; it is done by writing about a wide variety of women's bodies and bodily experiences, including trans feminine people's bodies and experiences. While inclusivity can be gestured towards in large survey texts, the more important work of creating space for trans feminine and gender queer voices is a necessary reparation for cis feminists to perform. By writing about their own queer bodily experiences, Anzaldúa and Lorde began to open that space for others, as Cárdenas acknowledged at the opening of this section.

The feminist tenet that the personal is political is an important part of anti-fascist struggle, as well as broader struggles. Hitler acknowledged this in the inverse in a speech he gave at the National Socialist Women's Nuremberg Party Rally in 1934:

> If we say the world of the man is the state, the world of the man is his commitment, his struggle on behalf of the community, we could perhaps then say that the world of the woman is a smaller world. For her world is her husband, her family, her children and her home. But where would the big world be if no-one wanted to look after the smaller world? How could the big world continue to exist, if there was no-one to make the task of caring for the small world the centre of their lives? No, the big world rests upon this small world! The big world cannot survive if the small world is not secure.

The false dichotomy he set between the smaller and bigger world was a strategic move; destabilizing both is vital to our struggle. And those of us who were never able to perform the socially-assigned roles that fascism would like to reinforce are positioned to open the way. The authors of *Night Vision* say: "When european capitalism reshaped gender under its rule, they did so around class & race... Only upper-class women and women from the middle classes, the Lady & the Housewife, could truly become these artificial women, of course. By definition, colonial and lower-class women were excluded, had *failure to gender*, we might say." [italics mine] Lorde, in her *failure* on their terms, may show us how to succeed in our sabotaging of gender and all that rests upon it.

For some, this sabotage has taken extreme forms. A member of Red Zora, an armed women's liberation group in the 1970s, said in an interview with a German women's magazine of the time: " The more women try to have legal women's institutions instead of armed liberation, the less we have and the weaker we are. Which then only becomes the further excuse for more accommodation to the patriarchy, in a downward gutter spiral. Armed liberation *is* extreme. It is both mother and daughter of a new culture, which thrives only in a state of illegality and danger. 'Women's life is a conspiracy.' This has been true throughout modern history." Women continue to take up arms in self-defense all over the world. Whether or not we find ourselves operating in such a state of illegality, we are all in danger from the heteropatriarchy and its enforcers. Failing to comply with their demands, and conspiratorially, intentionally, joyfully living otherwise, is the only way to open spaces of safety and pleasure.

Keating observes, "Generally we assume that cultural identities are permanent unchanging categories of meaning based on biology, family, history, and tradition... Take the rhetoric of authenticity that associates ethnic identity with the discovery of genuine, previously erased cultural and historic traditions. In such instances, meaning relies on unitary notions of an authentic past. However, I would argue that these authentic identities are created, not discovered." This self-invention is different from white appropriations in the name of self-invention: the authors are not operating from a position of societally-granted power, but are rather transgressively taking up their own power, both invented and inherited from disenfranchised cultures. It is this claim to authenticity on the basis of one's own personal experience, knowledge, and ideas, rather than some anthropologically discovered past, that makes this act a radical attack on the sites of social power rather than a reinforcement of them. To dismiss the idea that your practice and life need to be validated by another is to begin a practice of actual authenticity—that is, to refuse to pursue authenticity, or to use it as a weapon against others. *Night Vision*: "...what is 'natural' to race, to gender & nation keeps changing, evolving just as class does, as society develops and new needs and conditions emerge. In modern times, the ruling class decides what gender, race & nation are, while the oppressed fight back by liberating and redefining for themselves these building blocks of human culture."

The success of these authors with this approach does not mean that critique should be respectfully silenced; an interplay of questioning dialogue remains central to the practice. Keating raises questions about Allen's right to draw from a multiplicity of Native traditions; Allen also denies that white people can participate in "Indian religion" while simultaneously offering up Native myths for white consumption. I am not convinced of Allen's innocence in this regard—but it seems rude for me, a non-Native person, to dictate how she interacts with traditions to which she bears a closer relationship than I. Perhaps I am demonstrating my ignorance.

Keating makes a stronger claim in defense of Gloria Anzaldúa's mythic reinvention of Coatlicue, an Aztec goddess whose head was severed because of her pregnancy, and from whose neck two snakes rose: "...Anzaldúa adopts this mythic figure to invent an ethnic-specific yet transcultural symbol that represents the particular forms of oppression experienced by Mexican Americans, as well as those experienced by third world peoples, western women of all colors, homosexuals, and those who differ from the dominant

culture's norms. She associates Coatlicue's primary split with the double consciousness she experiences as a dark-skinned woman in contemporary U.S. culture and with the hierarchic division between reason and intuition found in Enlightenment-based knowledge systems. By rewriting Coatlicue's mythic fall, she synthesizes cultural critique with the invention of new ways of thinking." Anzaldúa is sharing her spiritual heritage in a way that can be only uniquely hers by transparently reinventing this figure to represent her needs, her analysis, her struggle, and offering identification with her in the spirit of solidarity to variously oppressed people. Her right to do so is founded not only in her ethnicity, but in her personal lifetime of suffering and struggle.

Taking up these spiritual/historical figures is a complex matter. Ta-Nehisi Coates considers Saul Bellow's contemptuous rhetorical question "Who is the Tolstoy of the Zulus?" in relation to his struggle to find the ethnic heritage he felt he needed to relate to while in college. Ultimately, he found Ralph Wiley's answer to be his own: "Tolstoy is the Tolstoy of the Zulus. Unless you find a profit in fencing off universal properties of mankind into exclusive tribal ownership." Coates concludes, in retrospect: "My great error was not that I had accepted someone else's dream but that I had accepted the fact of dreams, the need for escape, and the invention of racecraft." While I believe we can use our dreams of escape as a means of constructing a real way out—not just for ourselves, but for everyone—Coates is right that mythology alone will never suffice to make this world a livable one, particularly not when it is constructed on the terms of our oppressors. He remembers his shock when attending Howard University: "My history professors thought nothing of telling me that my search for myth was doomed, that the stories I wanted to tell myself could not be matched to truths. Indeed, they felt it their duty to disabuse me of my weaponized history. They had seen so many Malcolmites before and were ready." Oppositional mythology is often related to the kind of cultural essentialism that justifies both white supremacy and reactionary cultural nationalism, and has to be partially undone before it can expand to include more truths.

Anzaldúa's mythology, meanwhile, affirms the importance of one's cultural experiences and the power one can find within them, while also asserting her agency in constructing herself. It reminds me of the (mostly unspoken) clash between queer people of *nouns* versus *verbs*. There are those who have always known themselves to be queer—"born this way"—and those whose experience has been a process with many moving parts: nature, nurture, and autonomous decision-making. The search for rights and legal protection

often relies upon naturalistic arguments, ones that frame gayness or transness or brownness almost as a disability[b]—God or nature created you *different*, meaning less than the norm—so it is wrong for others to oppress you because it is cruel to persecute those "less than." This tends to erase the possibility/lived fact of joyously, deliberately experiencing one's own personal variance in defiance of social expectations—not living in spite of expectations, but living one's truth, regardless of how it was formed. This approach can be problematic when it relies upon uncritically taking up others' experiences, particularly when they involve a good deal of unchosen suffering, as in the case of straight cis people appropriating queer culture. Still, far better that straight girls experimentally kiss each other while drunk at queer dance parties than that we try to keep them in their lane, policing our hard-won garden of oppression. We must create space for *becoming*, not only for *being*.

challenge not complacency

While I previously identified white feminist deployments of "nature spiritualities" as an essentializing and depoliticizing force, these authors' evocation of a multiplicity of brown Divine women serves instead as a challenge that removes the possibility of simple solutions. "Lorde's metaphors of Woman combine transcendence with immanence... she declares that her power, although divine, is not other-worldly: she 'did not fall from the sky', nor does she descend gently 'like rain.' Instead, she 'comes like a woman'—like an Amazon warrior woman—with a sword in her hand." Keating sums up:

> ...Allen, Anzaldúa, and Lorde use mythic traditions to introduce additional levels of complexity into their works. They reject the male bias found in conventional western narratives; however, they do not simply "displace" or "delegitimate" specific stories or myths. By incorporating precolonial creatrix figures such as the Laguna Pueblo Thought Woman, the Mesoamerican Coatlicue, and the Yoruban MawuLisa into their writings, they invent new images of female identity that affirm their experiences as U.S. lesbians of color. Yet their revisionist mythmaking goes beyond the challenge to existing definitions of womanhood. As they replace the Judeo-Christian worldview with modes of perception drawn from Native American, Mexican Indian, and West African mythic traditions, they offer far-reaching critiques of western culture's binary structures. ...In short, they develop transformational writing and reading practices that simultaneously politicize and spiritualize their work.

b And, of course, many people with "disabilities" have fought against the same narrative as it is applied to them. I have found Amanda Baggs' video manifesto "In My Language" particularly educational and moving.

That is, their work is not merely descriptive or inventive; it acts in direct conflict with white supremacy and the heteropatriarchy. As Keating says, these authors are "agents of transformation who use myth to bring about concrete material change." While it is a revolutionary act for a person of color to know themselves and live into their power, these authors do not stop there—they have fought/are fighting for actual social change in the world. Anzaldúa describes herself as writing her body from and into the world—a spiritual, magical, and material act, one that does not stop at identity. This orientation towards action and struggle, in company with their resolute disinterest in essentialism and serving power, helps to prevent their mythmaking from stultifying into a new framework of oppression. Instead, these authors create opening: a landscape upon which to perform *becoming*, one rich with knowledge, suffering, complication, and joy. Within, they describe their own experiences and choices to *become*, opening the way for the rest of us to do the same. They do not build high fences around this land, nor patrol its borders. Rather, we are invited to traverse our own series of crevasses and canyons, peaks and valleys, warring with and creating the world around us as we move. For we readers to live in community with these authors, recognizing not only our pleasurable similarities but the delightful impossibility of our consensus, is to have tools for our daily conflictual interactions in the world: swords in our hands.

Displacement as a dis/place from which to fight

Saidiya Hartman tells us,

> The most universal definition of the slave is a stranger. Torn from kin and community, exiled from one's country, dishonored and violated, the slave defines the position of the outsider. She is the perpetual outcast, the coerced migrant, the foreigner, the shamefaced child in the lineage. Contrary to popular belief, Africans did not sell their brothers and their sisters into slavery. They sold strangers: those outside the web of kin and clan relationships, nonmembers of the polity, foreigners and barbarians at the outskirts of their country, and lawbreakers expelled from society. In order to betray your race, you had first to imagine yourself as one. The language of race developed in the modern period and in the context of the slave trade. The very term 'slavery' derived from the word 'Slav', because Eastern Europeans were the slaves of the medieval world.
>
> ...For Europeans, race established a hierarchy of human life, determined which persons were expendable, and selected the bodies that could be transformed into commodities. For those chained in the lower decks

> of a slave ship, race was both a death sentence and the language of solidarity. The vision of an African continental family or a sable race standing shoulder to shoulder was born by captives, exiles, and orphans and in the aftermath of the Atlantic slave trade. Racial solidarity was expressed in the language of kinship because it both evidenced the wound and attempted to heal it. The slave and the ex-slave wanted what had been severed: kin. Those in the diaspora translated the story of race into one of love and betrayal.

In Hartman's narrative, race itself is founded in forcible displacement; a difference generated by material action that has since become essentialized. But her project is not one of healing this displacement through cultural palinogenesis; that she identifies as a toxic path. Rather, she finds strength, revolutionary inspiration, and an empathy based in pain from her relationship to these unquiet dead. As fascists occupy the semiotic—and sometimes literal—territory of *home*, we must explore the terrain of displacement.

Hartman journeyed to Ghana to retrace ancient slave-trading routes, in an attempt to make sense of her ethnic history and narrative in a way that broke free of this narrative of race. She was met with hostility, contempt, and indifference... as she had half-expected. "The country in which you disembark is never the country of which you have dreamed. The disappointment was inevitable. What place in the world could sate four hundred years of yearning for a home? Was it foolish to long for a territory in which you could risk imagining a future that didn't replicate the defeats of the present?" Indeed, she says, "Most Ghanians were Christian, respectful of hierarchy and authority to a fault, straitlaced, and wary of foreigners in need of love. The country that most of us had come running from was the one of which they dreamed. They would have traded places with us in the blink of an eye." This experience of hers profanes the myth of return propagated by some black nationalists and many white supremacists. The original sin of forcible departure via enslavement does not negate the current struggles of the Ghanians she met, and the reality of black suffering in the United States does not affect its mythic status as a post-scarcity land of possibility and freedom for some abroad.

Hartman tells the story of U.S. black liberationists who went to Ghana when it won independence, shedding tears of celebration. In particular, she says, "An apocryphal story captures the bittersweet quality of these tears. Vice President Nixon, who attended the ceremonies [of Ghanian independence] as the head of the U.S. delegation, asked a group of jubilant men, 'How does

it feel to be free?' 'We don't know,' they replied. 'We're from Alabama.'" Still, Hartman reflects, "I envied them. In the sixties it was still possible to believe that the past could be left behind because it appeared as though the future, finally, had arrived; whereas in my age the impress of racism and colonialism seemed nearly indestructible. ...I knew that no matter how far from home I traveled, I would never be able to leave my past behind. I would never be able to imagine being the kind of person who had not been made and marked by slavery. I was black and a history of terror had produced that identity. ...There was no going back to a time or place before slavery, and going beyond it no doubt would entail nothing less momentous than yet another revolution."

This hopeless, fundamental, and permanent displacement is a reality of many struggles, from those of the African Diaspora to that of the refugees now arrriving on the doorstep of a Western Europe that offers no refuge. It is a rebuke to the essentialist notions of home, place, and belonging that are so important to fascism. There is the idea of making a new home for oneself, but even those new homes remain contingent: "The slave and the master understand differently what staying implies. The transience of the slave's existence still leaves its traces in how black people imagine home as well as how we speak of it. We may have forgotten our country, but we haven't forgotten our dispossession. It's why we never tire of dreaming of a place that we can call home, a place better than here, wherever here might be. It's why one hundred square blocks of Los Angeles can be destroyed in an evening. We stay there, but we don't live there. Ghettos aren't designed for living."

Visiting Ghana brought Hartman no remedy for her sense of displacement. The chief of a town she visited, Salaga, told her as she left, "Salaga is your home. Come and build a house here. We welcome it." But this brought her no comfort. "I was an orphan and the breach between me and my origins was irreparable... At last someone was saying, 'There is a place for you here,' and it sent me running in the opposite direction. But I was not seeking a proxy for a relationship severed centuries ago. Fictive kinship was too close to the heart of slavery's violence for my comfort. Perhaps this was the bastard's view, disloyal to both blood and house." It is this *disloyalty*, generated by *displacement*, that generates such rich and creative critique from those exiled to the borderlands, beyond possibility of any belonging.

II. Practice

They are right when they say
all women bleed.
Perhaps this is our menstrual cycle. Minstrel cycle. 28
days of blood. How many murders?
Lip-sync contests?
Tranny shows?
As if blood could only flow
from one orifice.

"Cycle Undone", Ahimsa Timoteo Bodhrán

Bodies—cultural, corporeal, terrestrial—converge, accrue meaning through layers, weaving of communal and personal memory... … Stories nest, within and adjacent one another, linking fragments and history/herstory, as the narrative moves toward, and away from, wholeness.

"Carved Crimson into the Bark of a White Page: A Queer/Trans Womanist Indigenous Colored Poetics", Ahimsa Timoteo Bodhrán

Indigenous prisoners in Canada have fought, through hunger strikes and other forms of activism, for the right to practice certain spiritual ceremonies with the aid of Aboriginal Elders. They have won formal consent in many places, but often continue to face hostility from prison guards and authorities. James Waldram, author of *The Way of the Pipe*, hopes to demonstrate to such authorities why supporting the practice of Native spiritualities within prison is in their best interest. He intends to explain and legitimize these practices for prison authorities and the therapeutic community, to remove them from the realm of strictly cultural/religious practices that are only sometimes tolerated and to instead situate them as necessarily available theraputic experiences. His is an inherently colonialist goal, if one done with good intentions—it is the same conundrum faced by all sympathetic allies who wish to negotiate between the cultural practices of the oppressed and those in power. I will examine Waldram's motives to find how these practices and their advocates are in solidarity with Aboriginal and prisoner struggles; how these practices and/or their explanation serve to undermine those struggles; how these Native practitioners negotiate their spiritual practices within the context of an extremely oppressive environment—and how this relates to issues of cultural identity. I will use the terms Aboriginal, Native, and indigenous to refer to Native American people throughout this section.

If it is a revolutionary act for people of color to understand and love themselves, this must be particularly true for Native prisoners. Native people in North America, although individual and community experiences vary widely, are coming generally from the collective trauma of centuries of disenfranchisement, deliberate cultural destruction, murder and torture, and continued life under white supremacy. In specific, many Native people were imprisoned or murdered in the past for practicing these same spiritual traditions. For many Aboriginal people today, the legacy of white supremacy includes living in poverty, struggles with alcoholism and/or drug use, domestic violence and sexual assault; many suffer from PTSD. In both the US and Canada, indigenous people are arrested and imprisoned at vastly disproportionate rates. This means that a large percentage of the Native population are living in the traumatic environment of prison while also struggling with personally traumatic pasts. To one degree or another, these prisoners have also been disenfranchised of their culture, forced to exist within a white context with which they have varying levels of familiarity and comfort. The entire criminal justice system is at odds with traditional Aboriginal value systems; traditional indigenous prisoners are often seen as defiant by racist prison authorities in situations of simple cultural conflict (e.g., not making eye contact is a sign of disrespect in white culture, but a sign of respect in many traditional Native cultures.) 84% of the 249 Aboriginal inmates Waldram spoke to saw prison as a racist place.

Waldram met with some resistance in persuading Native practitioners to speak with him; he says "While confidentiality was offered, some inmates were not easily convinced that no matter how honest and sincere we were, 'information' would not find its way to the administration and ultimately be harmful to them. …I found myself walking into an environment in which 'research' was a dirty, exploitative concept." Nor were these inmates wrong. While Waldram may have felt a personal commitment to not passing on information to the authorities about specific transgressions, his larger intention of convincing prisons that Native spirituality practices are safe and produce docile, reformed prisoners *helps to make that claim the case*. The prison only finds these healing practices acceptable insofar as they serve the goals of the prison; to believe the institution at large cares about healing inmates or serving the cultural needs of people of color is to fundamentally misunderstand the nature of prison—arguably the most violent enforcer of white supremacy within North American society today.[c] To some degree, the radical potential this project may have had in terms of challenging the existence of the prison system or its right to incarcerate indigenous people is

c See *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander.

dethorned by this process. To render indigenous spirituality more intelligible to white eyes is, in part, to continue the process of colonial exploitation.

If one conceives of prisons as instruments of domination and oppression rather than flawed but necessary social institutions, everything comes a bit more into focus. The extent to which prisons oppose the performance of these spiritual practices is the extent to which they are still married to the old, explicitly violent forms of human management through cultural disenfranchisement; the degree to which they support it is a reflection of their new interest in fostering self-management and self-rehabilitation among inmates—the self as the final privatization of corrections. On a practical level, "the spiritual path is also a path of nonviolence"—and, while teaching non-violence to people who have often been submerged in domestic or gang violence can be an extraordinarily needed intervention, it is also a means of defanging the resistance of oppressed people.[d] Waldram says explicitly: "It is evident that... the sweats [sweatlodge ceremonies] also serve an important institutional function, by reducing stress and illegal activity within the prison." One practitioner became such a success through his combination of practicing Aboriginal spirituality and completing a psychological program at a psychiatric correctional institution that he was invited to stay in a semi-professional capacity after he completed his program, presumably with the hope that he would produce more model prisoners.

To be clear: I am not intimating purely coercive motives on the part of the prison, nor accusing this prisoner of being an evil collaborator. Rather, I am pointing to the unintended consequences of pursuing a positive project within an inherently coercive and oppressive environment. Waldram notes about traditional forms of therapy within prison, "This form of treatment seeks to control and redirect their thought processes towards more socially acceptable, non-criminal goals. However, these goals are often interpreted by Aboriginal inmates as "White" goals which, by definition, are unattainable by Aboriginal men. Some men see the related therapeutic processes as serving only to further their assimilation and oppression." While therapy can be of real help when trying to heal from the violence, racism, poverty, patriarchy, and other factors that often affect people who have ended up in prison, it is perhaps sadly true that this new approach will serve to further their forced assimilation and oppression by means of feeding indigenous people back their own culture, as properly digested and regurgitated by their occupiers. Waldram laments that recividism is still used as the yardstick for rehabilitation—indeed, it is only a relic of how prisons have historically been

d See *Pacifism As Pathology*, Ward Churchill.

organized that anyone thinks they are about preventing people from breaking the law. For internal change—the transformation of the individual into the perfect citizen, as Arpinati dreamed for Italians—to become the provenance of justice system statistics is far from a liberatory development. Waldram is faithfully practicing anti-racism the best he knows how, and attempting to serve as an advocate for the prisoners he spoke to and the project that is immediately helpful in their lives. However, he consistently falls short in his understanding of the newest operations of racism, and his work may help to facilitate it. This contradiction is exemplified within his sharp critique of the opponents of Aboriginal spirituality within prison: "How could this form of healing ever expect to receive a fair hearing when the very methods used for the assessment are derived from, and continue to inform the cultural system that historically has oppressed Aboriginal people and currently feels compelled to criminalize them and throw them in jail?" Certainly; does he think that the new information *he* is providing will be used by this same cultural system any differently? Waldram serves as a perfect example of the problem of ally politics.

However, given the realities of our present situation, practicing Native spirituality in prison seems from the outside like an alternative still saturated with resistance, especially in contrast to being forced to cooperate with traditional prisoner rehabilitation tactics. It offers practitioners the ability to heal on their own terms—quite apart from the goals of the prison. The Elders who serve prison populations have often experienced prison themselves, are seen to have greater understanding than other therapists or religious leaders, and are usually viewed as trustworthy by prisoners. Their services do not advance one towards parole, unlike AA, and are therefore felt by prisoners to be more authentic. They focus on helping the inmate build a positive self-image, and do not focus on past wrong-doing or lawbreaking, unlike most prison therapeutic systems; they are also sometimes able to offer a culturally-situated view of mental illness that honors and respects rather than pathologizes the individual. They provide traditional ways of acknowledging and moving through wrongdoing that address inmate's feelings of guilt and atonement to those they've harmed in a way that prison may not—a means of addressing harm in a way that operates outside the ongoing harm of the correctional system. Many Elders are also willing to continue supporting people after they have been released from prison, a critical link often missing for former prisoners.

Prisoner practitioners largely report that connecting to indigenous culture—however disparate their previous relationships to their indigeneity were, and

despite the cultural blurring produced by the conflation of various tribal practices and participants into these ceremonies—was of great benefit in recovering from personal trauma, refraining from participation in violence, and healing from white supremacy at large. However, some inmates feel unable to participate in ceremonies behind the walls of a prison, believing that to do so would be sacrilegious, as prisons are far from sacred ground. For those who grew up in a traditional environment, the differences between their culture and the culture of the Elder who works at the prison—or the sort of pan-Aboriginality often offered—are sometimes too vast. Still, individuals from all of these trajectories may have cultural needs met by these spiritual practices. For the latter two, this was often their first opportunity to undo their internalized racism and form healthy, positive identities as Native people. Waldram sees prison practices of Aboriginal spirituality as a form of mythic healing; the narrative, delivered sometimes through symbols and sometimes more directly, is something like, "This is who we were; this is what happened to us. Here is the wrong way in which we have been living; but, through these changes in attitude and lifestyle, we can live right again. Someday the world will be better." This stands in interesting relationship to the current experiments with cognitive-behavioral therapy among "at-risk" youth in Chicago[e], which focuses simply on getting youth to think through their options and not respond immediately with violence, rather than on changing their entire worldview. While the two projects share the same goal from an institutional standpoint (rehabilitating black and brown men at risk of performing or suffering from violence), this effort around access to Aboriginal spirituality is much bigger than rehabilitation—it can create a shift in worldview that recenters practitioners in their community and history.

This narrative restructuring also occurs on a political level, allowing people to understand their histories as partially the result of living under colonialism and oppression rather than as the inevitable consequence of racial or personal evil. Waldram says about the counseling inmates receive from Elders, "A specific individual's problems are therefore placed within the context of historical factors; these problems are invariably defined as a loss of culture and spirituality leading to a crisis in identity. Treatment, then, entails cultural and spiritual education with the goal of rebuilding self-esteem and pride as an Aboriginal person." People's experiences of sacred circles sound not unlike people's experiences with feminist consciousness-raising groups—a place to discuss problems, offer non-prescriptive feedback, and build a sense of solidarity through sharing similiar identities and experiences. However, after

e See the group "Becoming A Man", working in collaboration with the University of Chicago Crime Lab.

individual experiences are situated within the historical context, Elders make the individual responsible for change in their own life. This is simultaneously empowering, realistic, and an unfair distribution of responsibility. While it is true that the victims of racism are frequently the primary agents of opposing racism, it is hardly just.

While it may not feel relevant to atheist readers, it would be patronizing and ignorant to ignore the practitioners' understanding of healing/resistance as stemming from Divine sources. I am reminded of the Lakota spiritual practice of the Ghost Dance, in relation to both the Wounded Knee massacre of the 1890s and the Wounded Knee standoff of the 1970s, at which Russell Means announced, "The white man says that the 1890 massacre was the end of the wars with the Indian, that it was the end of the Indian, the end of the Ghost Dance. Yet here we are at war, we're still Indians, and we're Ghost Dancing again." The Ghost Dance was originally performed both in *substitution* to violent resistance to white domination, and as *escalation* of that resistance—though it did not have any obviously violent aspects, it still affected whites strongly enough that they murdered 300 Ghost Dancers and children over it, and put Means and others on trial for their related "occupation" a hundred years later. This is a kind of weaponized spirituality, one that Anzaldúa also claims as part of her self-definition as a poet-shaman—she writes resistance into the world. Native spiritual practices are not reducible to therapy or culture—they are acts of Divine connection and, under white supremacy, resistance. White culture will continue to suppress them to the extent it finds them a threat.

While I feel that for indigenous people, particularly those living in conditions of intense repression, to connect to spiritual practices that have historically been a part of their culture exists in stark contrast to the appropriative white practices I examined in the first half of this essay, I do not want to fall into a culturally relativistic trap that condones and supports all interpretations of that spirituality as performed by indigenous practitioners. I must object to the teachings of the Saulteaux Elder Campbell Papequash that Waldram cites in relation to healthy sexuality and the sacred pipe:

> In this teaching, Campbell emphasizes that the pipe exists in two pieces that must be put together properly to communicate with the Creator. The stem is viewed as masculine and the bowl as feminine. When the stem is inserted into the proper place in the bowl (i.e., the stem hole, and not the bowl), the pipe comes together properly in unity. Furthermore, this unity of stem and bowl can only be achieved after the proper ceremony,

> which includes smudging with sweetgrass. The teaching imparts a view of proper sexuality, between male and female, and characterized by consent.

While teaching consent is important in all communities, linking consent and heterosexuality—especially in the context of the male-on-male sexual assault that sometimes occurs in prison—is an irresponsible and homophobic gesture. By asserting, as Campbell's teaching goes on to do, that the sacred pipe reflects the natural order of the universe as well as how human sexuality is supposed to function, homosexual interactions are implicitly portrayed as unnatural, unhealthy, and on the level of unconsensual sex in general. However, these are the teachings of just one practitioner. Many Aboriginal cultures have legacies of respect for what Western society would call homosexuals or transgender people, as Lorde, Anzaldúa and Allen have discussed at length; the cultural terms of the situation are simply different than they are in dominant white society. Perhaps, for example, my objection is nonsensically rooted in a Western conception of gender that is not relevant to this Elder's cultural framework. And, while I am afraid his teaching may inculcate or affirm homophobic viewpoints in his audience, or hurt queer people receiving his teachings in ways similar to how homophobic perspectives within the Abrahamic religions have impacted queers for centuries, this one person's perspective does not broadly indict Native spiritualities. Moreover, it is deeply hypocritical for white observers to search for homophobia or sexism only within the cultures of people of color... as it not only exists but is heavily armed within white society. Such efforts are likely to produce more of the oppression we ostensibly oppose, as we saw in the case of Mary Daly.

Waldram also discusses the difficulties incarcerated practitioners and visiting Elders have had in relation to female guards touching sacred objects, or being present for rituals while menstruating; they explain that women are seen as spiritually powerful, especially when menstruating, and that they could have a destructive impact on the ceremonies. Again, this is not necessarily a simple case of misogyny, because those lenses are designed for discussing white, Western culture. That does not mean that women do not suffer misogyny within Native cultures, or that outsider women interacting with Native spirituality do not deserve rights—but it means that each difficult interaction must be handled with specific understanding, intention, and a willingness to be open to the complicated perspectives made necessary by these interwoven histories and oppressions. That is true in all instances of oppression; it is just easier to see when we are trying to be careful of each other's obvious wounds and histories. There are no good solutions to a world still governed by prison.

And, of course, these complications are by no means limited to gender. While people are cited several times in this book as saying that the Creator does not see color, that race is essentially imaginary—a sentiment I am happy to echo—when a non-Native woman was hired to perform Aboriginal spiritual functions at a prison, inmates protested until she was replaced. This protest, equally, makes sense to me. This tension illustrates the difference between non-indigenous people being invited to show up with respect and a willingness to be peripheral to other people's culture, and the forcible insertion of non-Native people, either by themselves or by the system, into private religious ceremonies. To show hospitality towards white participants is not the same as to invite wholesale white appropriation and dominance over one's culture.

oppressed nationalisms

"The theory relieved me of certain troubling questions—this is the point of nationalism..."

—Ta-Nehisi Coates, on black nationalism

There is, of course, no united indigenous perspective on these issues; indigenous Americans are not a homogenous group, a fact that many would-be allies seem to find unclear. Russell Means, formerly a prominent member of the American Indian Movement and one of the defendants in the Wounded Knee trial I referenced earlier, offered one perspective in his 1980 speech at the Black Hills International Survival Gathering. Rather pointedly, he framed his call in European words: those associated with cultural nationalism, politically reminescent of Fanon, Césaire, and other philosophers/actors who have underpinned the forces of black nationalist formations. Means spoke against the Native use of Marxism, seeing it as a form of cultural suicide for indigenous Americans to adopt European frameworks, even those that intentionally position themselves as anti-colonialist. He spoke against the European de-spiritualization of the world, seeing this as the fundamental driving force of environmental destruction and genocide:

> There is the traditional Lakota way and the ways of the other American Indian peoples. It is the way that knows that humans do not have the right to degrade Mother Earth, that there are forces beyond anything the European mind has conceived, that humans must be in harmony with all relations or the relations will eventually eliminate the disharmony. A lopsided emphasis on humans by humans—the European's arrogance of acting as though they were beyond the nature of all related things—

> can only result in a total disharmony and a readjustment which cuts arrogant humans down to size, gives them a taste of that reality beyond their grasp or control and restores the harmony. There is no need for a revolutionary theory to bring this about; it's beyond human control. The nature peoples of this planet know this and so they do not theorize about it. Theory is an abstract; our knowledge is real.

This is a fairly essentialist statement, if one I am interested in entertaining: he asserts that "the nature peoples of this planet" bear truth in a way others do not. While some Marxists might argue that to de-mystify the world is central to the project of opposing oppressive forces that tend to mystify as a means of extracting value from the oppressed, Means argues instead for a holistic view of the harmony of all inter-related parts—a redeeming essentialism, one that counters a cold and alienating deconstructionist view. (This dualism is often a fundamental part of the white ecological mindset, as we have seen.) However, Means was careful to explain that he was speaking of the European cultural mindset, rather than Europeans as a monolithic racial force, a clarification specifically meant as an anti-essentialist gesture, though one that winds up being problematic itself:

> At this point, perhaps I should be very clear about another matter, one which should already be clear as a result of what I've said. But confusion breeds easily these days, so I want to hammer home this point. When I use the term European, I'm not referring to a skin color or a particular genetic structure. What I'm referring to is a mind-set, a worldview that is a product of the development of European culture. Peoples are not genetically encoded to hold this outlook, they are acculturated to hold it. The same is true for American Indians or for the members of any other culture.
>
> It is possible for an American Indian to share European values, a European worldview. We have a term for these people; we call them "apples" — red on the outside (genetics) and white on the inside (their values). Other groups have similar terms: Blacks have their "oreos"; Hispanos have "coconuts" and so on. And, as I said before, there are exceptions to the white norm: people who are white on the outside, but not white inside. I'm not sure what term should be applied to them other than "human beings."

This is interesting, terrible, and important as a critique to my general proposal. The internal-facing process of proving who is "really" a member of an ethnic group has been a source of great pain for many people of color,

no less myself. I find Means' evocation of "oreos" and related slurs offensive, and wonder if he is making a gesture towards maintaining his personal political power with Native American circles as an "authentic" possesser and transmitter of culture, in contrast to certain other indigenous individuals. Despite this, he is also communicating that we do not possess inherent racial, biological destinies, and that wars against cultures must be distinguished from race wars. He seems to convey the possibility of being "white outside, red inside", and would call those people simply "human beings." I enjoy the idea that whiteness is the *actual* state of exception, from which one could pass into humanity, like Wittig's escape from gender; Means' is a statement which values border confusion and sharing. It is still concerning to me as a materialist; but materialists are whom his speech is specifically directed against, after all. I could imagine many white people, fascinated with what they imagine to be Native cultures and spiritualities, using this statement as a justification for their practices while ignoring Means' larger message about cultural imperialism. To me, this speech is a good example of the limits and concerning implications of black and brown cultural nationalism—not the same as white nationalism because of history and social power, but ethically concerning nonetheless. Double consciousness may be a revolutionary motivator, but I fear the consequences of reactionary identity formation among the oppressed as well as among the privileged. If we want freedom for all, we cannot sacrifice solidarity on behalf of autonomy. Moreover, when we define ourselves on the basis of our predicates instead of our affinities as a means of group identification, we ignore our chosen differences in favor of those exacted upon our bodies by the power we oppose. As *Night Vision* sarcastically points out, those terms never even made sense, and continue to be primarily used to justify the extraction of cultural wealth:

> Indians never united against the British or the Spanish precisely because they weren't a race. They didn't consider themselves any closer to other native peoples than to these new european peoples. That's why there wasn't an American Indian movement back then but there is now, now that they've been given a common language, a common 'res' experience, a common situation—and have been made into a race by euro-capitalism.... De-populating the hemisphere of its original societies was and is fundamental to world capitalism; it's what made 'America' possible. ...Isn't it interesting that even white feminists are asserting their Master race privilege to appropriate whatever they want of Indian women's lives & cultures.... Don't think this is racism, because for white women this is our race. And isn't it our gender, too?

III. Theorizing ourselves

I was born in the gut of Blackness
from between my mother's particular thighs
her waters broke upon blue-flowered lineoleum
and turned to slush in the Harlem cold
10 pm on a full moon's night
my head crested round as a clock
"You were so dark," my mother said
"I thought you were a boy."

"To the Poet Who Happens to Be Black and the Black Poet Who Happens to Be a Woman", Audre Lorde

In an essay called "Theorizing A Black Feminist Self in Anthropology: Toward an Autoethnographic Approach", Irma McClaurin advocates for "the value of strategic essentialism for Black Women as a productive standpoint strategy." She argues that opposing essentialism is a white man's game—that it is well and good to preach the death of the subject among those who have long been constituted as such, but that, as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese says, many people who have historically been denied voices "are eager to seize the abandoned podium." She quotes Nancy Hartsock, who argues that post-modernists offer only critiques, no suggestions for how to replace oppressive frameworks with new ones; Hartsock calls for women to use their own lives as a basis for creating alternative realities, "an account of the world sensitive to the realities of race and gender as well as class."

While Hartsock's call appears close to the work I praised earlier, McClaurin's embrace of essentialism poisons her project. McClaurin seems to share the current project of American liberalism, which welcomes new subjects into the fold, restructuring the American narrative to accommodate them, without changing at a fundamental level. This liberal project attempts to support the idea that America was founded on freedom—that Native genocide, slavery, and other historical evils were aberrations from that principle that can be corrected rather than proofs that freedom through government has never been possible. History suggests that these reforms, while they will bring immediate relief to the lives of some, will serve to further strengthen the forces of capitalist productivity, enclosure, surveillance, and domination. Those of us who have contended with "identity politicians", people building social power for themselves on the basis of their oppressed predicates, now look with horror as their tactics seized and used by the alt-right—what was once a depressing twist become a weapon in the hands of whiteness.

McClaurin sums up her evaluation: "Moreover, while postmodernists and poststructuralists demand the demise of Master Narratives and Grand Theories, the place of subjugated narratives and marginal/minority/"native" perspectives in theory building remains unclear and tenuous. And so, while categories and rhetoric have shifted, power relations in everyday life remain enmeshed in identity politics as constituted within a modernist and essentialist cultural worldview. As Hartsock points out, it is difficult to see how the eradication of subjectivity can be politically deployed in the shaping of a new world order." Instead, McClaurin proposes the tactic of autoethnography: the ethnography of the *particular* as a solution to the problem of double consciousness. This sort of ethnography is "a critical, reflexive, strategic weapon"; it "represents the speaker/writer's subjective discourse, but in the language of the colonizer."

McClaurin poses real questions, but an inadequate solution that seems likely to serve enclosure via identification. Each time a new explanation of an oppressed people is put into circulation, it becomes captured by the totality and becomes a new mechanism of control. Offering people representation in society via citizenship (e.g., gay marriage) or commodities (e.g., commercial hiphop) simultaneously enhances the image of inclusivity and liberalism for the mainstream culture; silences/buys off/defangs the larger movement, reducing it to only its most radical fringe, which can then be incarcerated or mocked into oblivion; and creates a new body of patriotic and/or spending citizenry, ready to oppress the new Others. No one has the energy to oppose the wars we've been having in the Middle East for the last fifteen years the way that they did Vietnam; we are too busy enjoying the freedom to buy and marry, and, besides, didn't some number of those people try to take that very freedom away from us? Even if we are not convinced that these wars are entirely just, we are scared, and buy into society as a means for producing a sensation of safety; meanwhile, our neighbors go off to become embittered or to die in increasingly ugly conflicts which have no right side.

Jasbir Puar illustrates one example of this phenomenon in her pathopening work *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. She argues that some LGBT people, historically disenfranchised from whiteness (that is, the dominant framework of superiority in American culture, the space of civil rights, representation and normalcy[f]), are being welcomed into society at the

f "The ascendency of whiteness is a description of biopolitics proffered by Rey Chow, who links the violence of liberal deployments of diversity and multiculturalism to the "valorization of life" alibi that then allows for rampant exploitation of the very subjects included in discourses of diversity in the first instance." (Puar 3)

precise time that others are being singled out as the new and primary Other: the presumed terrorist... Arabs and those mistaken for them, whether or not they have actually committed acts of terror. "The terms of degeneracy have shifted such that homosexuality is no longer a priori excluded from nationalist formations." This simultaneous inclusion and exclusion also serves to queer the terrorist body and leaves black and brown, gender non-conforming, undocumented, and otherwise unacceptable queer people out of the new, "homonationalist", gay citizenry:

> Conspicuous consumption, class privilege, or signs of class inhabitation or rehabilitation through upward mobility—the "market virility" that Nast speaks of—join stability, longevity and duration, affective modalities nostalgically invoked as lost attributes of postmodernism, to present a recognized, well-integrated, publically valorized, and productive kinship formation: labor, nation, and simulated fertility—the productive citizen... These are attributes of the ascendancy of whiteness that stand in deep contrast to the black welfare queen, the accused Muslim terrorist who must register with the INS or expatriate himself and his family, and the incarcerated black or Latino prisoner.

This is aided and abetted by certain former Others who have become acceptable; Puar notes that the "'ascendancy of whiteness' in biopower incorporates the multiplication of appropriate multicultural ethnic bodies complicit with this ascendancy... Koshy adds 'the accommodation of new immigrants and the resurgency of white ethnicity' as compelling factors that 'obscure the operations of race and class' in transnational contexts." The authors of *Night Vision*, a 1990s critique of neo-colonialism, call this process as it is occurring in the United States *desettlerization*—a reshaping of the terrain to oppress everyone more subtly and fully, which granting of rights fundamentally reaffirms the right of white settlers to exist here in the first place. Once we are finally given our own trees, we can no longer perceive the forest. This is no mere philosophical problem, but a real deepening of oppression, trickle-up misery; as *Night Vision* puts it:

> ...for a white woman to go to medical school and become a doctor, several Afrikan women must die to pay for it. We put it that way deliberately, to bring your mind up short. White women in particular assume that their careers are only a positive thing for the world. But since white culture doesn't support itself, doesn't produce its own daily necessities, every breath that white women take costs somebody else something. ...many women in the Third World must be robbed of necessities of life to pay the bill. White men don't pay it, that's for sure.

I think it is no coincidence that McClaurin's critique of post-structuralism is so similar to Means' critique of Marxism. Both speak to real problems experienced by people of color in struggle against white supremacy to open spaces for their existence within this struggle. I think that, whatever our ethnicity, we should abandon the struggle to become free in this world, to be ever-more ethical subjects and consumers, and turn instead to the complicity, rebellion, and solidarity illustrated for us by Lorde and Anzaldúa (as well as struggles discussed in section 8.) I am interested in, all at once, taking seriously the indisputable fact that people of color, white women, and trans people of all races have been oppressed in this country for generations; in affirming subjugated narratives; and in honoring the phenomenons of double consciousness, intersecting worlds, and multiple flows of power that many of us experience. I believe that the personal is political, and that political action takes place on all levels—in one's self-conception, in small social interactions, and blows struck against the institutions that maintain hierarchies. I am interested by how people can reclaim their cultural pasts and speak their current lived truths without serving these forces—to neither be silenced and restrained from taking up power, nor to take up power in a way that ultimately serves the oppressors.

This is a tricky thing; sometimes it is a clear-cut refusal to cooperate with power even when it benefits you as an oppressed person, but more often it is an issue of tone. Deleuze, probably one of the post-structuralists of whom McClaurin is critical, calls for the project of *becoming*, as did Foucault in the opening quote. In contrast to an identity of "limited and measured things, of fixed qualities, permanent or temporary which always presupposes pauses and rests, the fixing of presents, and the assignation of subjects", he describes: "The paradox of this pure becoming, with its capacity to elude the present, is the paradox of infinite identity (the infinite identity of both directions or senses at the same time...) It is language which fixes the limits (the moment, for example, at which the excess begins,) but it is language as well which transcends the limits and restores them to the infinite equivalence of an unlimited becoming." It is this *becoming* that I see as a solution to the conundrum of forming identity that resists enclosure.

Intersectionality, theorized first by Kimberle Crenshaw and other critical race theorists of the 1990s, enhanced our understanding of how multiple forces of privilege and oppression rely upon each other and inflect each person's life. This was a great advance, but proved its own limit, as we see in the innovation of white identity politics and the soft cages of social justice organizing. Jasbir Puar, following the work of Deleuze and Guattari, argues

now for a view of ourselves not as intersections, but as *assemblages*: flows of power "where particles, and not parts, recombine, where forces, and not categories, clash", "affect[g] in conjunction with representational economies, within which bodies interpenetrate, swirl together, and transmit affects and effects to each other." This allows her to elucidate the forces acting upon bodies without affirming essentialist definitions of the body; indeed, the framework itself does not really allow her to do so. Assemblage theory puts even the integrity of the body itself into question, and recognizes the infinite multiplicity of the forces acting upon and through it at all times. If anything, it needs to be accompanied by a bit of materialism to keep it from straying into utter ethical abstraction.

The assemblage framework recognizes affect as a shaping force within social interaction and identity, rather than strictly a byproduct of those forces; it disrupts linearity and ethical clarity, rather than glorifying, for example, queers as those who have solved the basic problem of resisting gay assimilation. "Queerness as an assemblage moves away from excavation work, deprivileges a binary opposition between queer and not-queer subjects, and, instead of retaining queerness exclusively as dissenting, resistant, and alternative (all of which queerness importantly is and does), it underscores contingency and complicity with dominant formations." In contrast, Puar frames identity as "one aspect of affect, a capture that proposes what one is by masking its retrospective ordering... what one was—through the guise of an illusory futurity: what one is and will continue to be." It tends to reaffirm subjecthood, as does intersectionality more generally; but rather than the intersection between our various identities or experiences, the concern is now the juncture between our identities and our membership within various populations under management and control. To further identify ourselves with those populations, to affirm our own subjecthood, is in part to offer ourselves up as consumers or prisoners. As Norma Alarcón asked in her essay in *This Bridge Called My Back*: "Do we have to make a subject of the whole world?"

Puar sees the academic turn towards considerations of affect as a signal of identity fatigue; we have long since found the dead ends to the identitarian approach. Puar wonders: "If we transfer our energy, our turbulence, our momentum from the defense of the integrity of identity and submit instead to this affective ideation of identity, what kinds of political strategies, of

g Affect: how bodies tend to affect each other; the way one seems. Affect is synesthetic and by "nature" indescribable except on the slant; it is "that which escapes." (Massumi in Puar 207)

"politics of the open end", might we unabashedly stumble upon? Rather than rehashing the pros and cons of identity politics, can we think instead of affective politics?" However, affect is "always already within signification, within narrative, functioning as a form of critical resistance to dominant modes of being and becoming"; it too can be captured, and Puar asks "What do we make of the economic circuits that have already fully invested in affect—risk management, for example—and our collusion with these capitalist endeavors through our production of theories of affect?"

Each new theoretical framework we elaborate will provide new opportunities for us to betray ourselves. The only solution I see is to not become comfortable, to refuse to build a home within a framework that is secure enough that it may begin to be co-opted by others; to keep moving, to stay in struggle, to be always becoming our difference in a way that provokes wrath and evokes solidarity. Audre Lorde, who did this best, explains its grave importance:

> We must define our differences so that we may someday live beyond them.
> So this is a call for each of you to remember herself and himself, to reach for new definitions of that self, and to live intensely. To not settle for the safety of pretended sameness and the false security that sameness seems to offer. To feel the consequences of who you wish to be, lest you bring nothing of lasting worth because you have withheld some piece of the essential, which is you.
> And make no mistake; you will be paid well not to feel, not to scrutinize the function of your differences and their meaning, until it will be too late to feel at all. You will be paid in insularity, in poisonous creature comforts, false securities, in the spurious belief that the midnight knock will always be upon somebody else's door.
> But there is no separate survival.

becoming

The process of self-invention through cultural reclamation, bodily reimagining, and the construction of narrative is a necessary part of revolutionary practice for those of us who have long been denied a sense of wholeness—but it is not an end in itself. However doomed our struggles may be, our attempts at self-definition are even more doomed when they are not part of material and social struggle. We must keep our narratives flexible, innovative, and in a state of *becoming*; they must not exclude, but invite, and we must not trespass, but share.

Arendt describes the problem with Marx, an admirer of Darwin, as his investment in history, nature, and the lawful progress of both. What would it mean if we rejected all these false narratives and lived lawlessly in a world of difference? How can we view Haraway's cyborg as a figure of possibility and productive non-utopian crises, to use it "to rebuke the disappearance of the body within post modernism"? What is the value of being at home in the ecological web of one's location, or in centering displacement? How can we marry monstrosity and technology in a way that explores the dialectic introduced by Cardenas in the beginning of this chapter?

I think we ought to begin by putting Foucault in conversation with Lorde. He said:

> If identity is only a game, if it is only a procedure to have relations, social and sexual-pleasure relationships that create new friendships, it is useful. But if identity becomes the problem of sexual existence, and if people think that they have to "uncover" their "own identity," and that their own identity has to become the law, the principle, the code of their existence; if the perennial question they ask is "Does this thing conform to my identity?" then, I think, they will turn back to a kind of ethics very close to the old heterosexual virility. If we are asked to relate to the question of identity, it must be an identity to our unique selves. But the relationships we have to have with ourselves are not ones of identity, rather, they must be relationships of differentiation, of creation, of innovation.

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If identity is only a game, if it is only a procedure to have relations, social and sexual-pleasure relationships that create new friendships, it is useful. But if identity becomes the problem of sexual existence, and if people think that they have to "uncover" their "own identity," and that their own identity has to become the law, the principle, the code of their existence; if the perennial question they ask is "Does this thing conform to my identity?" then, I think, they will turn back to a kind of ethics very close to the old heterosexual virility. If we are asked to relate to the question of identity, it must be an identity to our unique selves. But the relationships we have to have with ourselves are not ones of identity, rather, they must be relationships of differentiation, of creation, of innovation.

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The Unquiet Dead

Anarchism, Fascism, and Mythology

6. Mythologies

Tell all the truth but tell it slant —
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise
As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind —

—Emily Dickinson

...it is all the potential of the signified that the poetic sign tries to actualize, in the hope of at last reaching something like the transcendent quality of the thing, its natural (not human) meaning. Hence the essentialist ambitions of poetry, the conviction that it alone catches the thing in itself... by fiercely refusing myth, poetry surrenders to it hand and foot.

—Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*

We have created our myth. The myth is a faith, a passion. It is not necessary for it to be a reality. It is a reality in the sense that it is a stimulus, is hope, is faith, is courage. Our myth is the nation, our myth is the greatness of the nation! And to this myth, this greatness, which we want to subordinate into a total reality, we subordinate everything else.

—Mussolini, in a speech he gave on the day he planned the March on Rome

Mythology is a complex series of narratives underlying all cultures, shifting as they interact. It is an important element of fascism; it is also, sometimes, a power source for struggles towards freedom. These oppositional mythologies are often absorbed and recuperated, justifying new layers of oppression as they become the mythology of the dominant culture. Some rationalists and materialists have tried to dismantle it entirely, citing mysticism and mythology's roles in oppression and domination; such efforts seem to falter quickly, or to become new mythologies. We use stories to understand the world, whether we want to or not.

There is a beautiful myth called *The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions*, written and published by Larry Mitchell from his gay commune in San Francisco in 1977. Excerpts appear throughout this section.

I. Myth made material

mystification and mythology

The Faggot Version

All the men could be faggots or their friends. They once were.

There still exists a faint memory of the past when the faggots and their friends were free. The memory lives in the faggots' bones. The memory appears at night when the bones are quietest. In darkness the faggots remember that once they lived in harmony with each other and their world. They adored the women who loved women and the women who loved women adored the faggots. Suddenly and strangely, some of the faggots began to show a dis-ease. First they cut down the trees which protected the other faggots from the wind and rain. Then they burned the earth which fed the other faggots. Then they killed the young animals and ate them themselves. Then they began to enslave the women—all the women. As the dis-ease advanced they stopped touching the other faggots and at that moment they became the men. They attacked the unsuspecting women who loved women. Bloodshed and devastation entered the bones of the faggots and began to drive the memory of harmony away. The women who love women and the faggots were the only ones who knew thecure for the men's dis-ease. But the men did not want to be cured. Their crimes against the others became more numerous and more demonic. More of the faggots became men and so more became implicated in self-loathing, a dis-ease of otherness. The men drove the healers away. And the healers went into invisibility to wait for the men to turn on each other.
At night in their invisibility the faggots remember freedom. They exchange the magical cock fluid and stroke each other's tired bones in memoriam and defiance.

—*The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions*

Karl Marx understood *mystification*, which he more frequently calls *abstraction*, as that which both allows and generates exploitation. He saw this mystification as the lubrication that serves to loosen workers' grip upon the means of production. This allows capitalists to generate excess labor value, nothing more than the blood, sweat, and tears of the worker; a commodity gains its profit margin solely through the extraction of life from those who produce it. This can occur because workers do not own the means of production or directly trade their product for those they need; they are alienated from their labor and its products, an alienation both material and metaphysical. Marx sees this abstraction—and the abstraction that means it is difficult to recognize—as the primary genesis of modern oppression. "A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of labor appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor: because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labor is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labor."

This is the basic idea of capitalist culture, in which people interact with things, or things interact with other things, rather than the producers of the various things interacting with each other. "...[T]he relations connecting the labor of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things." This is an economic characteristic that may have begun with capitalism: in the European Middle Ages (Marx's reference point, not of my choosing), "Personal dependence... characterizes the social relations of production just as much as it does the other spheres of life organized on the basis of that production. But for the very reason that personal dependence forms the ground-work of society, there is no necessity for labor and its products to assume a fantastic form different from their reality... Here the particular and the natural form of labor, and not, as in a society based in production of commodities, its general and abstract form is the immediate social form of labor." Mystical abstraction from our labor is not an age-old phenomenon, but a recent evil... which we can say only insofar as we begrudgingly accept notions of linear time and periodization. We do not know when someone first traded objects for symbols, or worked for a song; but we can point out when the problem became systematic.

This may seem entirely disassociated from the mystical as an element of spiritual practice. But no—Marx argues that the mystification of commodity

exchange flows forth from our society, and both generates and is necessitated by that society, in the same way religion does in non-capitalist societies. "The religious world is but the reflex of the real world," he says; he argues that nature spirituality occurs in societies who have not separated themselves from nature, and that Christianity would not be possible in a society that was not a great deal more abstracted. The mysticism of capitalist exchange is but a further sign of "progress", which by Marx's lights is the ladder towards communism, and by mine is a terrible lie, a stupid reliance on the linearity of time. Marx argues that mysticism will not disappear until direct production of goods by and for the workers who produce them takes place in an entirely transparent process. At that point, according to Marx's vision, we will live in an entirely rational, demystified world of direct exchange between each other and our surroundings, with neither religion nor capitalism.

While Marxist determinism replaced utopian or fuzzy ideas about the proletariat with materialist understanding of economic motives, it also produced a new layer of obscuring mythology. It is the process of proletarianization that produces revolutionary spirit, not the class itself; and in fact as generations of workers proceed from those who were first immiserated, revolutionary spirit wanes, at least along class lines. As the Duponts say in "Nihilist Communism",

> The structure of the world was built by the dead, they were paid in wages, and when the wages were spent and they were dead in the ground, what they had made continued to exist, these cities, roads and factories are their calcified bones. They had nothing but their wages to show for what they had done and after their deaths what they did and who they were has been cancelled out. But what they made has continued into our present, their burial and decay is our present... The class war begins in the desecration of our ancestors: millions of people going to their graves as failures, forever denied the experience of a full human existence, their being was simply cancelled out. The violence of the bourgeoisie's appropriation of the world of work becomes the structure that dominates our existence. As our parents die, we can say truly that their lives were for nothing, that the black earth that is thrown down onto them blacks out our sky.

Marx was writing in a time when the Western European Church held much more sway than it does now, but less than it had held for hundreds of years. Things have "progressed" much further since then; the worship of goods has become the worship of the spectacle produced alongside and around

those goods, an even more abstracted process. While all forms of labor exist concurrently, they have become so segmented and exported that the suffering of traditional factory labor, sweatshops, home piecework, sex work, prison labor, and other traditional and blatant forms of capitalist exploitation are often invisible to those who have the privilege of existing within/creating society. Those cultural producers engage in their own, ever-more abstracted and intangible labor—the endless reproduction and sale of themselves and their "uniqueness" via social media, art, and lifestyles. There is an increasingly shared sense among this privileged class that alienation and abstraction are unsatisfying, and many people are turning back towards "earlier" forms of nature-based spirituality, philosophy, and direct-contact lifestyles—homesteaders, DIY "makers," the "paleo" diet, Crossfit aficionados, etc. While I do not want to deny people their comforts, and enjoy many of them myself, it is unclear to me what the implications of these return-to-the-past practices are, given that we are still surrounded by the modern world. If mysticism is a reflection of the world, what does it mean to play an old movie into that reflection? Can it be other than an additional layer of spectacle and mystification, a sort of role-playing? To what degree is authenticity possible today, and to what extent is it even valuable? Is this movement in any way an act of real resistance to oppressive power, or simply a retreat into what feels personally satisfying?

Mystification is closely tied to mythology, the narrativized form of mysticism. Roland Barthes defines mythology as "a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the 'nature' of things." Yet that is precisely what mythology claims it has done. That claim is an exertion of power: "it transforms history into nature." Mythology asserts a mystified interpretation of the world as the perception of historical truth; and who holds the power to enact this truth (Foucault would say "veridiction") determines what sort of truth it is. When there is wide consensus about a truth-claim, it is because it is asserted and backed by those in power. When there is disagreement, it is because those in power disagree about what sort of myth is most useful; or because heterogenous societies are more stable, unable to reach enough agreement to take action, and it is in the interests of power to preserve this materially meaningless sense of plurality and democracy; or because those who have been historically powerless are taking up the power to assert their own claim. These conflicts are deeper than that of dominant interpretations opposing subordinate or conflictual interpretations: the power of myth, Barthes says, "is to transform a meaning into a form." Barthes divides mythology into bourgeois, fascist, and Leftist varieties; all of these tend to suffer from essentialism.

In essentialist mythology, there are only natural truths—forms—and deviations from those forms. It is a small step to assert that those deviations must be bad, as they are unnatural, incorrect. Essentialist mythology is therefore the capture of varying realities by power under a unifying and flattening definition, one that is much more powerful because it works by emotional and spiritual appeal rather than the rational—even its appeals to rationality are themselves mystical appeals: the evocation of the myths of science, common sense, and objective intellect. People do not go to war because their *reason* tells them it would serve their best interests to do so; people kill each other in large numbers only because of an assembled sense that *it is right for them to do so*. This sense is filtered through emotion and their beliefs about the world, beliefs which are easily constructed and manipulated by compelling myths like patriotism, racism, survival, the recognition of oppression, and the dream of freedom. The subtle warfare of everyday microaggressions is equally fueled by these essentialist myths.

Though explicitly religious mysticism often makes a stronger truth-claim than mythology, both are a way of viewing the world through a distorted mirror—*on the slant*, as Dickinson says. Both mythology and mysticism rely either on natural or pseudo-historical claims: that is the power of their veridiction. They implicitly say: "Whether by God, by nature, or by what has already happened, we *know* these things are true about ourselves and others, about what has happened in the past and what will happen in the future." This way of thinking is not compatible with dialectical materialist or post-structuralist understandings of the world, which are something like: "This is what has happened from one perspective (and there are so many that to claim any as the sole truth is impossible); this is our present situation, in the most literal and physical of terms, which is informed by our past but not bound to it; here is what we can extrapolate about the future, but there are too many intersecting flows of power to be able to predict it." This does not mean materialists are able to resist the siren call of mysticism or mythology any better than others; Marx had far too much faith in the myth of the end of capitalism and the utopian success of the worker's revolution. He enabled Stalinist horrors by advocating the myth of progress-thinking, and failed to imagine that capitalism could find ever more terrains of expansion and means of control—failed to even show up to one of the greatest manifestations of utopian communism in Europe at the time, the Paris Commune (the myth of which I happily embrace.) Demonstrating another pitfall, George Sorel, following Proudhon and Marx, deliberately evoked the myth of the General Strike as a motivating force and goal for the workers of the world, only to see fascism make a home within his elaborations on the abstract sublimity of

violence, abandoning the liberatory foundation of his project. Revolutionary myth is not a tame lion. Barthes:

> At its worst, mythology is an exertion by power that violently empties complicated, multiple, real meaning and asserts an essential understanding that must be shared. What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if it goes back quite awhile, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality... The world enters language as a dialectical relation between activities, between human actions; it comes out of myth as a harmonious display of essences. A conjuring trick has taken place; it has turned reality inside out, it has emptied it of history and has filled it with nature, it has removed from things their human meaning so as to make them signify a human insignificance. The function of myth is to empty reality; it is, literally, a ceaseless flowing out, a haemorrhage, or perhaps an evaporation, in short a perceptible absence.

One notices this absence most keenly when a myth one was accustomed to being supported by no longer fulfills one's emotional needs—when one rejects Christianity, or capitalism, or a subculture, only to take up paganism, radical activism, or a different subculture. That felt lack, however, is not the lack of that *particular* myth; when one's new myth fails to suffice one will feel disillusionment (literally, the evaporation of one's sustaining illusions) again. It is the lack of all myth to fully contain and account for all reality, and its tendency to suffocate or destroy those moments and impulses that dialectically contradict them. Barthes points out that ever-more specific toys tend to destroy the creativity of children: "...the child can only identify himself as owner, as user, never as creator; he does not invent the world, he uses it; there are, prepared for him, actions without adventure, without wonder, without joy." Myths can serve the same function for adults; we find ourselves playing parts whether or not they even hold interest for us, and feel unable to creatively disrupt them, make them our own, because we are instead molding ourselves to them. Sometimes they give us a feeling that reality is more meaningful than it is, and sometimes that motivates us to do great things; other times, we just spend six months playing Pokémon Go, or find ourselves the patriarchs of Christian households.

The solution to this, materialists would argue, is to reject all mythology and attempt to fully see/make reality as it is—an effort easier stated than performed. It is a self-defeating enterprise, because it asserts some possible rational objectivity; the materialist would have to inhabit a kind of God-like

position outside of the myths of society. Most materialists therefore spend their time in simply deconstructing history and the present as they are able. There is some hope in this; Barthes observes: "...we know very well that work is 'natural' just as long as it is 'profitable', and that in modifying the inevitability of the profit, we shall perhaps one day modify the inevitability of labor. It is this entirely historified work which we should be told about, instead of an eternal aesthetics of laborious gestures." Sometimes things fall apart; the resistance succeeds, for a time, though, so far, never fully or permanently, and its collapse into politics is at least troubling. "Left-wing myth supervenes precisely at the moment when revolution changes itself into 'the Left', that is, when it accepts to wear a mask, to hide its name, to generate an innocent metalanguage and to distort itself into 'Nature'. This revolutionary ex-nomination may or may not be tactical, this is no place to discuss it." Has *The Hunger Games* produced any revolutions lately? Has Democracy Now? Could they? This is an open question. Unlike people who theoretically want liberation and are paid (whether tangibly or socially) to think about it, people acting for liberation in any particular moment, while always influenced by myth, are moved primarily by their real experiences of oppression, self-definition, and community. Those are somewhat mystical abstractions, but are frequently made very tangible and real. Think of the utter reality of the murder of Mike Brown for the people who protested and rioted in Ferguson, and how tangible the action of those myths was in their lives.

Barthes says that Leftist myth tends to fail to the extent that it is self-aware as Leftist, because

> *Left-wing myth is inessential*... everyday life is inaccessible to it in a bourgeois society.... Finally, and above all, this myth is *poverty-stricken*. It does not know how to proliferate; being produced on order and for a temporally limited prospect, it is invented with difficulty. It lacks a major faculty, that of fabulizing... This imperfection, if that is the word for it, comes from the nature of the 'Left': whatever the imprecision of the term, the Left always defines itself in relation to the oppressed, whether proletarian or colonized... The speech of the oppressed is real... it is quasi-unable to lie; lying is a richness, a lie presupposes property, truth and forms to spare. This essential barrenness produces rare, thread-bare myths: either transient, or clumsily indiscreet; by their very being, they label themselves as myths, and point to their masks.... One can say that in a sense, Left-wing myth is always an artificial myth, a reconstituted myth: hence its clumsiness.

A large reason why the Left has never won—which victory would in part mean its own destruction—is that it cannot either completely reject myth in favor of the real and enact that reality fully, nor can it in good conscience fully embrace myth.This is because mythologies are, fundamentally, stories about who we are, or who someone else is. They serve to strengthen group identity, and often do so by acknowledging, and therefore creating, the Other: the one who is not like us, is not part of the human community. Once the Other is recognized, warfare seems inevitable. Fears, justified or not, emerge: fear of contamination, of losing resources, fear of the *essential strangeness* of the Other. This last fear, when solidified by an accumulated power structure, is called racism, or misogyny, or xenophobia, or ableism, or homophobia, or a million other particularized and empowered hatreds. Power is the most important element in these hatreds: second, I argue, is essentialism. It is impossible to generate essentialism without some form of mysticism and/or mythologies; it is impossible to sustain fascism without essential mythology. I will call these source mythologies "proto-fascist mythologies." This is perhaps a provocative stretch: most of these mythologies did not actually lead to fascism. Still, I think, they could. While I won't discuss it at length, bourgeois myth rounds out our list of fabulist enemies—see Barthes' *Mythologies* for a detailed analysis.

But not all mythologies generate hatred and destruction, in not all times and places. Some mythologies have not reified the construct of the Other; these were generated in times and places that did not know the Other, that welcomed strangers as possible friends. Their warfare was not based in hatred and fear, but in disagreement or competition for resources—just as deadly in the immediate sense, but less poisonous in the long run. It has been a long time since most people were allowed to live in such peace, however, and it is very hard, perhaps impossible, to generate fresh mythologies that deny the impulse towards constructing the Other in any level. I will call these "peace mythologies." This is not an entirely positive designation: peace often does not allow for necessary movement, and peaceful actors are often slaughtered by those they refuse to see as enemies. Nor is it a negative designation: one can argue that the dignity of the open hand, even when it is spat upon, is the only worthwhile gesture. However, while I would not deny them to those who grew up within their framework, I do not think it is useful for outsiders to adopt these peace mythologies as an ideological foundation in our present situation.

Lastly, there are "liberation mythologies." As a necessary precept, I will say that no liberation mythology has yet succeeded. It is an old truism that the

liberation of one is made possible only by the liberation of all, which has not yet occurred. The liberation of one may make the liberation of all more possible—but very often the "liberated" one becomes the new boss, same as the old, or finds their liberation one of name only. So there is no such thing as a successful liberation mythology; but those that exist in the state of rebellion are, I think, are valuable.

There are a multitude of liberation mythologies generated by thousands of resistance cultures—music, oral histories, dances, stories, symbols. However, in an attempt to avoid aiding the process of legibility and recuperation, I will primarily discuss the liberation mythology of speculative fiction, a field which at least intends to be accessible to everyone. First, however, I will discuss the stories of our enemies.

fascist mythologies

> The faggots act out their fantasies without believing them to be real.
> The men act out their fantasies always proclaiming that they are real.
> The faggots' fantasies create play—dressing up and dressing down.
> The men's fantasies create responsibilities—going here and doing that.
> The faggots' fantasies are about love and sex and solidarity.
> The mens' fantasies are about control and domination and winning.
> The faggots move towards the limits of living in the body for they have known body ecstasy and want to live there with everyone always.
> The men move towards the limits of living among things for they have seen great collections and want to live there alone always.
>
> —*The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions*

> It seems to me beyond doubt that out of this transformation a new man will once again emerge in Europe, half from mutation and half from breeding: the German man... All the preconditions for his emergence are there: behind him a quarter-century of radical crisis, shattering upheavals, of being churned up as no other people in the world has experienced, and in the last decade a growing awareness of biological dangers, one which bears out the precept that a people which becomes conscious of the dangers facing it produces genius... I know that this people will become free and its great spirits will come with words which once more have meaning, will be valid for other peoples, and will bear fruit. In their syllables there will be everything which we have suffered, the celestial and the transient, the legacy of our philosophical suffering.

> I know they will come, not gods, and not fully human either, but fruit of the purity of a new people. Then they will make their judgment and rip up the beds of idleness, and knock down the walls which have been thinly whitewashed over and where sacrilege has been committed for a handful of barley and a morsel of bread—they alone will do this. I know they will come, and I am sure I can hear the reverberation of their footsteps. I am sure the victims they claim deserve their fate: I see them coming.
>
> —Gottfried Benn[a], "The New Breed of German"

> The mysticism of Fascism is the proof of its triumph. Reasoning does not communicate, emotion does. Reasoning convinces, it does not attract. Blood is stronger than syllogisms. Science claims to explain away miracles, but in the eyes of the crowd the miracle remains: it seduces and creates converts.
>
> —an anonymous article published in a fascist magazine run by Italian expatriates, 1925

Some have described fascism as a fundamentally irrational force; this rings true to me, however rationalized its actions are by those who accept its irrational framework. This framework was consciously created out of mythology: again, the compelling emotional narrative that shapes identity, generates reality through the action it motivates, but is also a sufficient force within itself. By Gillete's analysis,

> Sorel wrote in his work *Reflections on Violence* that we enjoy the liberty to act freely 'above all when we make an effort to create within us a new man with the purpose of transcending the historical frameworks that confine us.' This transformation is afforded through the use of myth. Sorel regarded myths as inexhaustible sources of regeneration. They enabled one to transcend a detested present and overcome material obstacles. Myths, to Sorel, need not be true, or come to pass. Their efficacy lay in their power to mobilize and energize the masses... the most powerful myths are dogmatic, simplistic, and imperative.

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a Benn was a poet who, despite having had a romantic relationship with a Jewish poet, sympathized with the Nazis until the Night of the Long Knives; then he broke with them. His poetry was later condemned by the SS magazine as degenerate, Jewish and homosexual. Banned from writing, he joined the Nazi army. His work was then banned after the war for his early Nazi sympathies,

Sorel had in mind the myth of the General Strike, a Leftist conception of worker's liberation. Fascists did not share his goals, but were happy to adopt his tactics; mythology is not always loyal to the principles of its creators.

The fascist myth is both historical and utopian, futuristic and classical. "Futurism created a political mythology whose material was drawn from the world of the future and the human imagination... while the fascist establishment constructed a political mythology whose concepts were drawn from the history of imperial Rome..." While German fascists could never quite make peace with the Futurist rejection of the past, many Italian Futurists were closely allied with the Italian fascists, and were a sort of myth-production factory for the movement.

> The Futurists created a series of myths, such as the "racing-car," the "new man," modern war," and "heroic technology." The racing-car as a symbol, and as the Italian futurists' expression of the challenge of modernity, was a new Pegasus—a living organism, full of mechanized vitality, reflecting technological vitality and the new heroic spirit. The racing-car symbolized for Marinetti the complete holism of man and machine. The "new man" of *Homo mechanicus* was integral to the modern-technological vision, which the futurists saw as a dynamic new structuring of the world via technology.

People no longer talk in such glorious future-of-the-past terms, but bear a strong nostalgia for it; it is no accident that the Space-X posters for their proposed reality show about colonizing Mars are "retro-futuristic" ones. There is little doubt that the Google engineers, TED presenters, and STEM education advocates of the world genuinely and passionately believe in such a technological salvation. Origin mythologists are also quite common today; while few may be interested in resurrecting the legacy of "Rome, the oldest civilization of Europe", plenty are interested in a return to earlier, more "natural" forms of living, an exploration and enactment of their own ancestral legacy, if only the most enjoyable and ethically condoned portions of it. These two impulses, towards technological salvation and a return to basics, are often present in the same person, today the perfect bourgeois citizen, whose Google Calendar reminds them to go to the Farmer's Market. While this may seem contradictory, this marriage was a historic component of Italian fascist myth, the upside-down of bourgeois myth.

Barthes says about bourgeois myth, which dismisses the title "bourgeois" and prefers the illusory middle-class designation, "The flight from the name

'bourgeois' is not therefore an illusory, accidental, secondary, natural or insignificant phenomenon: it is the bourgeois ideology itself, the process by which the bourgeoisie transforms the reality of the world into an image of the world, History into Nature. And this image has a remarkable feature: it is upside down. The status of the bourgeoisie is particular, historical: man as represented by it is universal, eternal." Few people enjoy the privileges of the rich, but in modern social democracies, it has to be assumed that no one is extremely poor or extremely rich; as they say in Lake Wobegon, all of our children are above average. This myth of success is a particularly violent lie, one that makes the failure to succeed against the odds a personal and embarrassing one. Fascist myth, on the other hand, is based in failure. The perception of one's intrinsic superiority, and the discontinuity with one's actual lack of success, gernerates the back-and-forth evolution of injury and resentment that leads a fascist to conceive of their grand project of nation-state-individual correspondence, to feel themselves and their in-group capable of leading that project successfully, and to justify some of the most brutal acts in history. Since one cannot claim one is successful *now*, to be taken seriously one must assert they were successful in the *past* and will be in the *future*. I think it is no contradiction that the rise of the bourgeois myth of success as normalcy coincides with the rise of fascist myth; privileged children, promised everything, are often angry when they do not get it.

Richard Griffin asserts that all fascisms share the common mythic core of the concept of "rebirth", for which he has coined the term "palingenesis." "The mythic core that forms the basis of my ideal type of generic fascism is the vision of the (perceived) crisis of the nation as betokening the birthpangs of a new order. It crystallizes in the image of the national community, once purged and rejuvenated, rising phoenix-like from the ashes of a morally bankrupt state system and the decadent culture associated with it." This imagery is particularly appealing to young intellectuals who are disenchanted with the possibilities available to them in academia and culture, and to returning veterans, often discarded by society, traumatized by their wartime experiences, and unsure if what they fought for was worth it. These are, arguably, the two most important constituents in the proto-fascists of pre-Nazi Germany, pre-regime Italy, and white supremacists in the U.S. Nationalism, whether populist or elitist in conception, is an easy go-to for both groups—whether or not it meets with success seems to be dependent on whether it is compatible with the general social mood (do others feel society is in crisis?), whether a charismatic leader arises to hold its banner, and whether some fusion of populism and elitism is possible in practice. This is distinct from the nationalist formations of people of color within white

society—while the impulse towards nationalism can be destructive there as well, it is a resistance ideology; there is no fundamental sense of entitlement to success, or motivating sense of betrayal at its heart. One cannot feel *betrayed* by having nothing if one was always *told* you would have nothing. Even the storied past of one's culture can only do so much to deny one's daily reality.

The recent U.S.-based social movement Occupy could be seen as a proto-fascist movement, with its lack of diversity in most locations, its focus on the undeserving wealth-holding 1% that is reminiscent of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories against mysterious ursurers, its sense of disenfranchisement, and its occasional appeals to nationalism. Populism is a force that can be harnessed by the left and right alike. However, Occupy was saved from this drift by its occasional actual diversity; its Leftist tendencies, which kept explicitly racist rhetoric from the movement; certain anti-nationalist elements; and a near-total disorganization. It was directly democratic in the sense that anyone could do anything, but only if they could summon the social force necessary; too many chaotic interruptions occurred for any of these individuals to become leaders. I think Occupy escaped a drift towards fascism primarily, however, because it lacked this palingenetic call to rebirth; it was fundamentally a reformist movement, without revolutionary aims along either left or right lines.

The palingenetic myth is a definitionally essentialist one, as it relies upon the belief that there is an ethnic or historical core to particular peoples, an *essence* that can be reborn by shedding the false layers of contamination, self-defeat, and decadence that have accumulated upon it. Barthes called it "...this disease of thinking in essences, which is at the bottom of every bourgeois mythology of man (which is why we come across it so often.") If one, using a materialist perspective, chooses instead to view the people who inhabit a land and (more-or-less) share a culture as individuals without heritage, their only essential truth is what they define between themselves during their lifetimes; that truth must also necessarily be multiple, as experiences seldom coincide exactly. This could be an alienating, disempowering, and atomizing approach, particularly when applied to people who have been unconsensually deprived of their ancestral history by forces such as slavery, colonization, and genocide. However, had some form of it won out in pre-war Italy and Germany, it may have prevented a fascist ideology from crystallizing that ultimately meant the death and suffering of millions. Figuring out this conundrum is vital to our time.

Mythology was deployed across the map by fascists. Gabriel D'Annunzio, aforementioned orator and occupier of Fiume, married religion, politics, and art in his speeches. He described the spirit of Fiume as the Holy Spirit, thus elevating his mission there and the occupants of the city to the holy realm familiar to Catholic Italians. The Futurists fused anarchist and socialist myths with evolving fascist myths. This synergy is what created the force behind Italian fascism, made it more than just a political ideology and instead something that felt noble and true, worth dying for. This combination of mythologies was described positively by the British fascist Oswald Mosely:

> ...on the one hand you find in Fascism, taken from Christianity, taken directly from the Christian conception, the immense vision of service, of self-abnegation, of self-sacrifice in the cause of others, in the cause of the world, in the casue of your country, not the elimination of the individual, so much as the fusion of the individual in something far greater than himself; and you have that basic doctrine of Fascism, service, self-surrender to what the Fascist must conceive to be the greatest cause an the greatest impulse in the world. On the other hand you find taken from Nietzschean thought the virility, the challenge to all existing things which impede the march of mankind, the absolute abnegation of the doctrine of surrender, the firm ability to grapple with and to overcome all obstructions. You have, in fact, the creation of a doctrine of men of vigor and of self-help which is the other outstanding characteristic of Fascism.

Because our reality is dialectical, dialectical mythology is the most effective. These seemingly contradictory sentiments inform and strengthen each other within the fascist enterprise. Fascist myth also served to elevate and justify of the bloody and boring in terms of holy struggle. Without such elevation, who would fight for these causes? Stephen Whittaker argues that the fascist myth was merely one in a long progression of dominant Italian self-defining myths, designed to get the population to make sacrifices for these struggles. Before Sorel, the liberation myth of the Paris Commune took hold in the late 1800s among Italian communists, socialists, and anarchists. It replaced the nationalist myth of unified Italy generated in the *risorgimento*, and was only later replaced by the nationalist myth of fascism, as Sorel's mythic violence found more resonance than his myth of the General Strike. In the period after the defeat of fascism, history was revised by the myth of the Italian resistance; while both the resistance and the forces it fought against were real, prioritizing the remembrance and celebration of the resistance was a way to forget thousands of Italians' uncomfortable participation in or complicity with fascism. The war of resistance had now become the holy cause.

Joseph Goebbels' "Total War" speech is one of the most explicit examples of how Nazis drew upon a pre-existing, deepseated mythological framework to motivate Germans to new heights of active participation in fascism when such participation was needed most. In the speech, Goebbels sketches the outline of an international Jewish, Bolshevik, capitalist conspiracy that threatens the survival of the German people; he need not fill in this sketch, because it is traced upon the vivid picture painted by Volkische ideology, years of propaganda, and the sense of physical threat generated by the recent battle of Stalingrad, all of which he refers to glancingly. Moreover, he claimed that "two thousand years of European history" were threatened by Bolshevism; the war was not only one of personal survival, but of the existence of humanity (as it had been reductionarily defined by racist Eurocentrism.) He defined it as a war against terrorism; in an argument that finds much currency today, he argued that fighting terrorism justifies extreme measures that would not be justified in a civil framework. He even offers gender equality in return for fuller participation by women in the war economy: "We have no right any longer to speak of the weaker sex, for both sexes are displaying the same determination and spiritual strength." Throughout his speech, there is a rhythmic return to an appeal to passion, to dedication, to self-sacrifice, to proving the strength of the people—and, many times over, his speech was interrupted by cries of agreement and dedication from his audience.

"Total war" has come to mean not only the complete participation in warfare on every level by every person, but also attacks on civilians and on the means of subsistence (which perhaps crystallized with Sherman, but certainly existed less formally during various colonization processes), and on the psychological survival of one's opponents. This "scorched earth" approach has come to justify rape, economic devastation, and the murder of children—always a part of warfare, but one that previous myths sought to obscure rather than to justify. In this mythology, total commitment to one's cause has come to mean the abandonment of all ethics and morality that hinder one's ability to utterly destroy one's enemy. Even if certain parties refuse this mentality, the fact that it is on the table, an option, a possible worldview, has the effect of rendering that formerly honorable refusal saccharine, bourgeois and contemptible to many. That is perhaps the most lasting legacy of fascist mythology: the murders it has justified extend far beyond those that took place within the Holocaust, Ethiopia, Spain, and the terrain of World War II.

Concentration camps continue to fascinate us as sites of dark fantasy, nightmares from Western mythology made real. It is often told how some U.S. congressmen refused to believe such a thing had really happened until they toured the camps after the war ended; then they vomited. Arendt observes,

> It is not so much the barbed wire as the skillfully manufactured unreality of those whom it fences in that provokes such enormous cruelties and ultimately makes extermination look like a perfectly normal measure. Everything that was done in the camps is known to us from the world of perverse, malignant fantasies. The difficult thing to understand is that, like such fantasies, these gruesome crimes took place in a phantom world, which, however, has materialized, as it were, into a world which is complete with all sensual data of reality but lacks that structure of consequence and responsibility without which reality remains for us a mass of incomprehensible data. The result is that a place has been established where men can be tortured and slaughtered, and yet neither the tormentors nor the tormented, and least of all the outsider, can be aware that what is happening is anything more than a cruel game or an absurd dream.

But the camps did not occur because we slipped sideways into an alternate reality: they were the inevitable evolution of Nazi mythology, which did not arise in a vacuum.

The mythology of modern conscious white supremacists, as in all subcultures who feel oppressed, both serves to sustain their values and to say on the slant what cannot be spoken openly. In example, the "Fourteen Words": "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children." This is a quote from modern U.S. white supremacist martyr David Lane, who died in prison in 2007. So famous are these words, and so coded their meaning, that many white supremacists have a tattoo of just the number 14. This coding is not only to hide affiliation from authorities, but is important in itself: secrecy is its own kind of status. The slogan itself, while racist, seems relatively innocent, but speaks to the cultural memory among white supremacists of David Lane's membership in the Silent Brotherhood, which assassinated a Jewish radio host and robbed an armored car in pursuit of larger ambitions—a failed but "noble" cause to which they are also committed, a project to be resumed some day. These words evoke and generalize the repression David Lane experienced and other white supremacists feel, and confer the sense of bravely fighting a necessary and spiritually vital war for survival. By calling for a future for white children, the dictum further elevates and personalizes the fight; total war is justified by the sense of protectiveness parents feel for their children. For a subculture largely consisting of poor, single white men, who believe themselves marginalized and persecuted, that empathetic elevation is completely necessary for them to continue with their beliefs and occasional activity; they need not know or care for any actual children, who tend to complicate things.

II. Speculative fiction

> The faggots once called themselves the men who love men. But they discovered that they did not love men, they loved only other men who loved men which was not that many of the men. The men who hate others were false and death-inflicting and obsessed with being strangers. The men who hate others hate the men who love men. And this hatred is so strong that it turns the men who love men into faggots.
>
> —*The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions*

A less practically menacing example of reactionary ideology emerged during the recent online battle over the Hugo Awards, a prestigious science fiction prize. Recently, female, queer, and/or people of color authors have begun to be nominated for the award, in keeping with the general cultural trend towards finally recognizing and celebrating the work of oppressed people. The Sad Puppies, an internet-based group primarily composed of white men, were angry about this, arguing that the Hugo Awards were catering to "social justice warriors" and identity politicians rather than judging works solely on their artistic merit. I think there is some truth to this, that awards are being given in a tokenizing and even exoticizing manner, out of lip service than a revolutionary re-appraisal of what kinds of work by whom are worth celebrating... but the Sad Puppies did not share my critique. Their reactionary motives and ideology were exemplified by their overwhelmingly conservative, white, straight male nominees. The Sad Puppies flooded the ballot boxes of the Hugo Awards; in the end, the award committee solved their dilemma by giving no award in the categories dominated by the Sad Puppies. As Orson Scott Card, himself a reactionary fabulist, has taught us—the enemy's gate is *down*.

There have been conservative elements in science fiction since its beginning; Robert Heinlein, a libertarian, famously argued in his novel *Starship Troopers* that citizenship should be granted only to those who complete military or civil service. Barthes makes a case that the classic Jules Verne tale, *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea*, is the story of bourgeois imperialist exploration. "Verne belongs to the progressive lineage of the bourgeoisie: his work proclaims that nothing can escape man, that the world, even its most distant part, is like an object in his hand, and that, all told, property is but a dialectical moment in the general enslavement of nature... The basic activity in Jules Verne, then, is unquestionably that of appropriation." Science fiction also often relies on the concept of a hostile Other, manufactured only to be murdered for the

sake of a (usually white) human character's development. But, just as often, science fiction makes the case against xenophobia and for the celebration of difference. On the whole, the genre has been largely liberal, sometimes even radically so; it has been a safe haven and source of community for social misfits, and as such has derived an internal ethic of tolerance and plurality. Both its move towards critically questioning its white male dominance and the reaction from the right are battles to redefine this terrain; and, as nerds have risen to power in our world, this myth-war also reflects their battle to make their values and the bourgeois sphere mutually compatible.

While it may seem a petty dispute to outsiders, it is emotionally loaded because it is a battle not only over subcultural dominance but over mythology, a mythology that emotionally sustains its participants and shapes their dreams. Should that mythology be shaped by all sorts of dreams? What if some of those dreams mean the suffocation of others? Is the community's practical, day-to-day ethic of diversity something deeper, more fundamentally liberatory, or simply a biopolitically effective tool for management and extraction of creativity and authenticity? This is an open question currently being fought out, largely in abstracted online spaces. These spaces are traditionally a home for some of those who are marginalized in reality; but, even as SF and the internet have become popularized, we all have come to see ourselves as marginalized, whether or not material reality seems to agree. How can we use myth to reject the impulse towards creating or guarding safety, and turn instead towards more creative goals?

critical analogies

Ursula K. Le Guin is a well-known anarcha-feminist science fiction and fantasy author. Her tale "The Ones Who Walked Away From Omelas" is a quite transparent allegory: the letters "Omelas" are the reverse of Salem, OR. She thought up the story while driving from Eugene to Portland, possibly reflecting on the liberal, quasi-Edenic, but bleached-white nature of her state... a "nature," like most, that has a blood-drenched material history, including the constitutional exclusion of black people from residence until 1926. Le Guin describes a utopic society that rests on a single wrong: the suffering of one innocent small child, locked alone in a dark room. Everyone in this society is brought to see the child when they reach the age of responsibility; most eventually make peace with fact that the suffering of another is key to their happiness, and remain productive, joyful citizens. But the story ends on the note of exception:

At times one of the adolescent girls or boys who go to see the child

> does not go home to weep or rage, does not, in fact, go home at all. Sometimes also a man or woman much older falls silent for a day or two, and then leaves home. These people go out into the street, and walk down the street alone. They keep walking, and walk straight out of the city of Omelas, through the beautiful gates. They keep walking across the farmlands of Omelas. Each one goes alone, youth or girl, man or woman. Night falls; the traveler must pass down village streets, between the houses with yellow-lit windows, and on out into the darkness of the fields. Each alone, they go west or north, towards the mountains. They go on. They leave Omelas, they walk ahead into the darkness, and they do not come back. The place they go towards is a place even less imaginable to most of us than the city of happiness. I cannot describe it at all. It is possible that it does not exist. But they seem to know where they are going, the ones who walk away from Omelas.

The strength of Le Guin's story lies in its brevity; she does not attempt to describe the outcome of the traveler's journey, nor detail the rupture that individual felt with their home society. She spends most of the story describing how perfectly harmonious that society is—how many problems have been solved, how joyous and ideal each day is. She even describes how the knowledge of the child's suffering serves to make the art and music of Omelas rich and complex in a way that perfect utopia could not. It is relatively easy in a world as flawed as ours to choose to reject society, but her argument in this allegory is that even with the extension of every comfort and privilege, no one is free while even one is oppressed, even if all other comforts are contingent upon that oppression. In saying simply that some choose to walk away, Le Guin encourages the reader to form a profoundly revolutionary suggestion to themselves. I am reminded of this Baldwin passage, written about seeing a white liberal unconsciously betray herself:

> I was ashamed of myself for being in that room; but, I must say, too, that I was glad, glad to have been a witness, glad to have come far enough to have heard the evil speak. That woman gave me something, I will never forget her, and I walked away from the welcome table.
> Yet, hope—the hope that we, human beings, can be better than we are—dies hard; perhaps one can no longer live if one allows that hope to die. But it is also hard to see what one sees. One sees that most human beings are wretched, and, in one way or another, become wicked; because they are so wretched. And one's turning away, then, from what I have called the welcome table is dictated by some mysterious vow one scarcely knows one's taken—never to allow oneself to fall so low. Lower, perhaps, much lower, to the very dregs: but never there.

In her collection of short stories *Sister Emily's Lightship*, Jane Yolen takes a more traditional approach to the critique analogy: the subversive revision of standard male European fantasies. In her story "Lost Girls," a Peter Pan remake, a girl who arrives in Never Never Land finds her predecessors, the "Wendys," huddled in a kitchen; the girls have all been forced to mother the Lost Boys so the boys could stay children forever. When the Wendys recognize their oppression, organize and go on strike, they are sent off by the Lost Boys to fight the pirates. "There are always more Wendys where they came from," Peter tells the Lost Boys. To the delight of the Wendys, Captain Hook turns out to be a female pirate who specializes in rescuing the unwanted girls of the world. This story not only skewers the misogyny of the original tale, but answers the real problem of the lost boys of our world with that of the equally lost girls; one wishes there was indeed a feminist pirate such girls could turn to, rather than, as often happens, having only the opportunity to trade the old boss of their patriarchal families for the new boss of their patriarchal boyfriends, pimps, and bosses. The real stories of how some of these young women self-organize to fight for their liberation deserve recognition. Not only through her critical interventions, but also in her portrayals of unusual and sympathetic narratives of transcendent Othered strength, Yolen is a radical fabulist.

Yolen's story "Granny Rumple" is yet more pointed. It is a retelling of "Rumplestiltskin", one of the stories gathered by the Brothers Grimm in their search for quintessentially German folk tales that would reaffirm and celebrate German identity; this was part of the German Romantic trajectory that precede Volkische ideology, which itself set the stage for National Socialism. In Yolen's story, Rumplestiltskin and his strong wife—Yolen's ancestor—are protagonists, and Ukrainian Jews. As such, they are used to persecution; the pogrom that followed the misinterpretation of Rumplestilskin's plea to have his loan repaid was horribly ordinary. Yolen tells the story as if it was passed down within her family, but *on the slant*, a *détournement* tactic she purposely uses throughout this collection in homage to Emily Dickenson. The slant turns sharpest at her conclusion:

> But the story, you say, is too familiar for belief? *Belief!* Is it less difficult to believe that a man distributed food to thousands using only a few loaves and fishes? Is it less difficult to believe the Red Sea opened in the middle to let a tribe of wandering desert dwellers through? Is it less difficult to believe that Elvis is alive and well and shopping at Safeway?
>
> Look at the story you know. Who is the moral compass of it? Is it the miller who lies and his daughter who is complicitous in the lie? Is it the

> king who wants her for commercial purposes only? Or is it the dark, ugly little man with the unpronouncable name who promises to turn flax into gold—and does exactly what he promises?
>
> Stories are told one way, history another. But for the Jews—despite their long association with the Lord G-d—the endings have always been the same.

Yolen's revison of this tale to depict Jewish suffering at the hands of anti-Semitism not only exposes the anti-Semitic elements in the original tale, but the ways in which mythology is used to justify such suffering. Furthermore, her critical allegory is a subversive myth of its own. She describes her Granny Rumple, wife of the murdered Rumplestiltskin, as a strong, intelligent woman who fights as best she can for her family... and passes down the story of their oppression to her children. Even more poignantly, in another story she describes Lilith, first human rebel against God, as the Angel of Death, moved for the first time in centuries by the suffering of a child in the gas chamber of a concentration camp. Lilith wonders, "What are Jews that nations swat them like flies? That the Angel of Death picks their faded blooms? That I drink the blood, now bitter, now sweet, of their children?" Lilith defies God again to rescue one of these children. "Give me a mother's span with my child, and I will serve you again until the end of time... You could not be so cruel a god as to part us now." This heartfelt depiction of defiance against God, one of the oldest and strongest counter-mythologies that exists, wrings the reader's heart with empathy for the speaker, subverting the patriarchal and oppressive thread in many religions that tells us defiance of God, no matter the provocation, is the worst sin possible.

There are many other radically deconstructive moments in this collection, but one is particularly notable in its self-awareness: Yolen breaks the fourth wall, explaining her intention as a writer through the mouth of her protagonist, and showing the positive potential for liberatory myth as a whole. In "The Traveler and the Tale," she describes a time-traveler sent to embed liberation myths in the past, trusting that the folk tale of mice overthrowing slavery would be more effective in defeating future enslavement that doing anything as meager as killing a future dictator. "History, like a scab, calcifies over each wound and beneath it the skin of human atrocity heals. Only through stories, it seems, can we really influence the history that is to come. Told to a willing ear, repeated by a willing mouth, by that process of mouth-to-ear resuscitation we change the world."

However, the critical analogy can fail on at least two fronts—while some might argue that Yolen and Le Guin's allegories are too preachy, or too sappy, the opposite fault is possible. George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* is acclaimed for its realism, its refusal to take refuge in the tropes of the fantasy genre. While there are still gauzy veils and knightly helms, beneath both are generally maggots and betrayal, and there is a good deal of humanity and warmth in what first appear to be monstrous enemies. Heroes die without warning, and those that survive are often reduced to using despicable tactics. This is a breath of fresh air for many fantasy readers. However, particularly in *Game of Thrones*, the television adaptation of the series, the critique has doubled back on itself. At what point does the sexual violence of the series stop being a critique of fantasy tropes, a realistic depiction of the violence of a misogynist society and the horrors of war, and become once again an enactment and celebration of that violence? Many would argue that the television adaptation has rounded that curve (although the book series contains many more sexual assaults than the television series—214 to 50 as of 2014, horrifically—viewers seem more affected by the violence than readers.)

This sad turn is possible because *Game of Thrones* is only partly a critical allegory: it is also a fantasy story, intended for escapist enjoyment. When one "enjoys" a rape scene, no matter how much that enjoyment is inflected by horror, it is neither a depoliticized nor a safely entertainment-only experience: it is the full-circle recuperation of the critique the author may have meant to issue. The story of the characters trying to make sense and show each other warmth in a completely violent and chaotic world, of trying to enact their various myths of success, honor, loyalty, or rationality and often failing—this is also the story of the reader's experience in their own world. The same goes for the fundamental sense of alienation and fragmentation the story produces in the reader—it feels so real because it is what we are used to, but that reality is not desirable either.

the structurally deconstructive

The Neverending Story by Michael Ende is at once a myth, the story of a myth, and an attack upon the structure of story/narrative/myth itself. It tells of a young boy who reads a book about the destruction of a fantasy world by the Nothing. He becomes invested in the story as it unfolds, and near the final catastrophe realizes that the whole point of the story was for this investment to occur—the characters he has grown to love are now speaking directly to him, imploring him to speak them into being. Only by his deliberate engagement in their creation can the world survive. When he accepts this

call, he is transported into the fantastical world, living and creating it at once. There he experiments with power, and is ultimately destroyed by his arrogance.

This is, of course, still allegory for the experience of writing fantasy. But the magical realism of the end of the reader's separation from the myth he consumes, ultimately becoming the sustainer of what sustains him, is an epic, revolutionary call to cross the barrier Barthes described between the real and the mythical, the barrier between those who create the world through action (the workers/the colonized) and those who create it through abstraction (the owners/the mythologists), the barrier Leftism cannot overcome as long as it is the Left. The Nothing that is the alternative to answering this call to arms is one of brutality, alienation, and despair. It is not the end of myth, but the proliferation of bourgeois and fascist myth. A conversation between two of the characters while the barrier between the real and the story still exists:

> "...If humans believe Fantasia doesn't exist, they won't get the idea of visiting your country. And as long as they don't know you creatures of Fantasia as you really are, the Manipulators do what they like with them."
>
> "What can they do?"
>
> "Whatever they please. When it comes to controlling human behavior, there's no better instrument than lies. Because, you see, humans live by beliefs. And beliefs can be manipulated. The power to manipulate beliefs is the only thing that counts. That's why I sided with the powerful and served them—because I wanted to share their power."
>
> "I want no part in it!" Atreyu cried out.
>
> "Take it easy, you little fool," the werewolf growled. "When your turn comes to jump into the Nothing, you too will be a nameless servant of power, with no will of your own. Who knows what use they will make of you? Maybe you'll help them persuade people to buy things they don't need, or hate things they know nothing about, or hold beliefs that make them easy to handle, or doubt the truths that might save them. Yes, you little Fantasian, big things will be done in the human world with your help, wars started, empires founded..."

I find Ende's book an intriguing proposal for an avenue towards anti-fascist liberatory struggle. Ende deserves to be taken seriously by anti-fascists; as a youth, Ende dodged the Nazi draft and, quite unusually among the Gentiles in his area, risked his life by joining an underground anti-fascist resistance group. Ende does not view the revolutionary project as an anti-mythical one; rather, he calls for us to instead bridge the gap between reality and myth, to enact the world we wish to see. While it would feel easiest to take up that challenge without asking further questions, Ende didn't, and neither should we, as his story indicates; his protagonist's misadventures and failures in using his narrative-creating/living power leave him a friendless tyrant. How can we answer Ende's challenge without coming to the same fate, becoming as much an enemy as those we currently oppose?

Many other authors have skillfully challenged narrative certainty through the use of precisely deconstructive language. I think most of Jorge Luis Borges's perfectly indescribable *Labyrinths* and *Fictions*—perfect because to describe is in part to capture. Jeanette Winterson's novel *Written on the Body* never describes the gender of the protagonist, who sleeps both with a man and a woman. By this absence, she *détourns* gendered expectations of romantic and sexual relationships. SF Grand Master and radical queer essayist Samuel Delany is also famous for this tactic. In his masterpiece *Dhalgren*, the protagonist wanders through a perpetually shifting dreamscape, where acts occur beyond the realm of morality or reason. There is little plot, and the protagonist feels unsure of his own path, history, and experience; there are many unresolved references to Greek mythology that may or may not be significant. The protagonist reads and possibly writes portions of earlier chapters of *Dhalgren* in a notebook he finds; later portions of *Dhalgren* are composed of entries from the notebook. The final lines of the book end in a fragment resumed by the first lines of the book. The book, in short, is comprised of mirrors within mirrors, and narrative is offered only for long enough to be destablizing when it disappears.

There are frequent sexual encounters in *Dhalgren*, all intensely complicated microcosms of the conflicts between desire, power, gender, interest, and aesthetic; unexpectedly, they fall apart. While critics have concentrated on the revolutionarily discontinuous literary structure of the book, Delany seems to place more value on the feedback he received from readers about moments in the book like these encounters: "For these readers, the technical difficulties of the book, the eccentricity of structure, and the density of style went all but unmentioned. After all, if the book makes any social statement, it's that when society pulls the traditional supports out from under us, we

all effectively become, not the proletariat, but the lumpen proletariat. It says that the complexity of culture functioning in a gang of delinquents led by some borderline mental case is no less and no more than that functioning at a middle-class dinner party." Others, he goes on to say, do not appreciate the destabilizing presence in his work of the idea that precarity can be, and is for many, normal. Delany's entire career has challenged norms and expectations, but he does not limit himself to such provocation or to a blind elevation of the oppressed; his tactics of deconstruction limit and destroy our understanding of the narrative as soon as it develops. This, I think, is his greatest contribution among many to the project of liberation mythology; and it is not a dry one. Delany cites Barthes in his evocation of *jouissance*, ecstatic sexual pleasure, felt during reading and rereading—the necessity and joy of willfully misreading, of challenging and destroying our initial impressions. Alan Moore also discusses this libidinal power: "[*Watchmen*] was the result of an almost sexual union... The sexuality of creativity—on that level, human interaction becomes less of an oppressive pyramid and more of a dance, an orgy, something that you can imagine being a bit of fun."

Delany is an anti-essentialist writer in both form and content, and a conscious one, and a mythologist nonetheless. He is able to read against Le Guin's rather bland and essentialist utopic considerations,[b] but also to create his own myths... which do not find much resonance with most bourgeois readers, because of Barthes' problem of the Left mythologist; bourgeois society demands exactly the kind of emotionally satisfying and tidy narratives to which Delany is an antithesis, while they nonetheless are forced to respect his genius as it operates on their terrain. Delany's roles as a literary critic, social critic, and human being are not separate in any way from his work as a mythologist. As such, he exemplifies the best spirit of science fiction, while demonstrating that there is no such spirit unless we choose to make it, and helping us question if we ought to do so.

However, the tactic of deconstruction is not without its traps and faults, beyond the obvious possibility of navel-gazing inaction. On the more academic side of the fantastically deconstructive, we find a cautionary tale to this effect: *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, and *A Thousand Plateaus*, by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. The books, legendarily written via correspondence while on drugs, are extremely dense and obscure; while certain of their ideas, such as rhizomatic structure, deterritorialization, striated space, and assemblages have become popular enough in academia to warrant a close reading, it is always a struggle. I have heard a theory that

b See Delany's essay "Reading 'The Dispossessed'" in his collection *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw.*

Deleuze and Guattari deliberately wrote the books as traps for readers so that it would be unusable by academics, an unrecuperable nut impossible to crack. If that was in fact their intent, it failed. Both of these books are taught and discussed not only by gender theorists and post-structuralist philosophers, but also by officers in the Israeli Defense Force. The analyses Deleuze and Guattari intended to be useful to resistance movements are being used as a source for tactical inspiration to understand and destroy the Palestinian resistance movement. This has led to truly science-fictional moments occurring in reality. A Palestinian woman interviewed by a journalist for the *Palestine Monitor*, describes the experience of interacting with IDF soldiers using tactics inspired by their reading of Deleuze and Guattari:

> Imagine it – you're sitting in your living-room, which you know so well; this is the room where the family watches television together after the evening meal, and suddenly that wall disappears with a deafening roar, the room fills with dust and debris, and through the wall pours one soldier after the other, screaming orders. You have no idea if they're after you, if they've come to take over your home, or if your house just lies on their route to somewhere else. The children are screaming, panicking. Is it possible to even begin to imagine the horror experienced by a five-year-old child as four, six, eight, twelve soldiers, their faces painted black, sub-machine-guns pointed everywhere, antennas protruding from their backpacks, making them look like giant alien bugs, blast their way through that wall?

Deconstruction is a tool like any other, one that can be weaponized by the state and capitalism when they choose to destroy communities and lives that do not profit them.

I am struck between the similarity between these two passages: from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, the journal entry the Fellowship finds in Moria, just before doom strikes,

> We cannot get out. We cannot get out. They have taken the bridge and Second Hall. Frár and Lóni and Náli fell there bravely... Óin's party went five days ago but today only four returned. The pool is up to the wall at West-gate. The Watcher in the Water took Óin—we cannot get out. The end comes soon. We hear drums, drums in the deep.

And from Ta-Nehisi Coates, reflecting on his youth,

> ...we would walk to the house of someone whose mother worked nights, play 'Fuck tha Police', and drink to our youth. We could not get out. The ground we walked was trip-wired. The air we breathed was toxic. The water stunted our growth. We could not get out.

I do not know if this mirroring was intentional, but it suggests Coates' early life in Baltimore as a kind of life in Moria—a place once full of hope for cross-racial unity, now a place of death and despair for those who find themselves there as evil forces arise, who can only be saved by luck and great sacrifice. Either way, Coates' writing is a mythologizing of survival more profound than Tolkien imagined.

Speculative fiction is a terrain almost uniquely suited for asserting the reality of experiences and humanity that do not fall within dominant narratives. While it has historically been a field for white men (and sometimes white women) to speculate about the Other—often leading to fearful or exotifying narratives[c]—some of those white men (and sometimes white women) have used it to assert the common personhood of those from different cultures, to paint the joy and beauty of consensual exchange, of the delight in difference. More recently, some of those placed by society as Others have used it not only to assert those same values, but also to explain and legitimize themselves. The first published science fiction authors of color were necessarily doing so in a conflictual manner; Samuel Delany's novel *Nova* was originally rejected by a prominent publisher who claimed that audiences would not be able to identify with the book's black protagonist. This refusal to, fundamentally,

c The work of H.P. Lovecraft is particularly notable in this regard—his incredible depictions of fantastically unsettling alien geometries cannot be unrelated to his intense, closely-held, racism.

consider black people as a possible audience for science fiction; to allow white audiences to be challenged; to support Delany in explicitly writing from his experience as a black person; and to comprehend the possibility that black people might want to read science fiction through the lens of a protagonist of their own color—let alone the possible interactions and contributions other people of color might want to have within the field—was a shameful and self-limiting moment, one that must have been echoed hundreds of times during the so-called Golden Age of science fiction, the age the "Sad Puppies" would like to see reborn. In her memoirs, Nichelle Nichols, a black actor who played Lt. Uhura on the classic *Star Trek* television and movie series, reflected on how hard she and the show's producer had to fight for not only the existence of her character but even for *each line of dialogue* her character was given. The massive outpouring of fan mail she received from black viewers, overjoyed to see a black woman in a non-servant role on television, was deliberately withheld from her; she received only a few letters a week of the hundreds she was sent. The racism of the network made her resolve to quit the show—until Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in a chance encounter at a cocktail party, convinced her to stay with the show so she could continue to inspire black youth. Whoopi Goldberg and several NASA astronauts, among others, credit their pursuit of their dreams to seeing Nichols play that role.

Her bravery, and the bravery of other early people of color working within the genre, succeeded. Not entirely; as I outlined earlier, the reactionary backlash from white men angry at the opening of the field continues explicitly and subtly, as youth of color are discouraged daily from pursuing in speculative fiction, the sciences, and other possible avenues towards freedom. However, many more science fiction authors of colors are being published, and many gatekeepers within the industry are belatedly recognizing the necessity of supporting those authors and their work. Explicit meta-reflections on the relationship between people of color and science fiction are being offered; I particularly felt *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Díaz, which uses the tactic of magical realism to discuss science fiction, the history of the Dominican Republic, and the fictional stark life of one Dominican-American teenager.

> The strong women told the faggots that there are two important things to remember about the coming revolutions. The first is that we will get our asses kicked. The second is that we will win.
>
> The faggots knew the first. Faggot ass-kicking is a time-honored sport of the men. But the faggots did not know about the second. They had never thought about winning before. They did not even know what winning meant. So they asked the strong women and the strong women said that winning was like surviving, only better. As the strong women explained winning, the faggots were surprised and then excited. The faggots knew about surviving for they always had and this was going to be just plain better. That made ass-kicking different. Getting your ass kicked and then winning elevated the entire enterprise of making revolution.
>
> —*The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions*

This inclusiveness has led to the old problem of recuperation, enclosure, and identity formation. Building a place within a society from which you are forcibly excluded is a defiant and subversive act. When you "succeed" in this enterprise, power grants you only a small and confined patch of territory, and polices its boundaries. So long as you comply with those expectations, you are more than tolerated, you are exploited: yesterday's enemy is now a valuable member of society, an exotic producer of cultural gold, an innovator. I fear this is beginning to happen within science fiction. While I am completely opposed to the Sad Puppies and both the mythical and real worlds they seem to want, I too see a trend towards identifying authors based on their placement rather than their work—for the purposes of monetized exploitation. Characters and authors who are queer or of color may be excluded less, but they are being used in a tokenizing and appropriative fashion by an industry that is still dominated by straight white men.

It is hard to know how to escape these two terrible options, but Nnedi Okorafor and her work *Who Fears Death* gives me hope. The novel is set in a post-collapse Sudan; Okorafor herself is Nigerian-American, and while she primarily resides in the US, has spent much time in Nigeria. There are very few science fiction novels set anywhere in Africa, and very little science fiction from Africa in print;[d] the very terrain of the novel is of a different mythical

d Okorafor discusses the reasons for this phenomenon in her blog post "Is Africa Ready For Science Fiction?")

character than those set in white territory or imagined by white authors, and reads at odds with the desert-people trope well established in the genre. Her protagonist Onyesonwu is a rape revenger with magical powers, herself conceived by rape performed by a sorceror intent on genocide. Onyesonwu grows up isolated and hated, viewed as a monster, and experiments with assimilating into the society that does not want her (Okorafor handles the issue of female castration/female genital mutilation here in a particularly complex and deft manner.) As she finds herself and her difference, she finds her power, and goes to war, though never without complexity, trepidation, humanity and friendship. Onyesonwu is the hero I have been waiting for, and, judging from the awards the book has received, I am far from alone. Okorafor has created a complex, compelling myth not founded in white history, one that neither ignores the grim realities she and all of us grapple with, nor agrees to treat with them. While her work may be exploited by the white establishment, it refuses recuperation to the extent anything can.

Okorafor's success is so notable because it is almost singular. Strictly fictional Leftist hero mythologies are not common; the Left prefers to canonize real-world heroes, some of whom have become fully recuperated and integrated into bourgeois mythology.[e] The lack of these purely fictional liberatory heroes is for good reason: it is hard to imagine a hero that can realistically reject the corrupting power that comes from their victory. In both real life and fiction, they usually remain heroes because they die at the end of their stories.

The two most successful science fictions could both lay claim to some degree of liberatory or utopian potential; *Star Wars* on the one hand, *Star Trek* on the other. But *Star Wars* was the deliberate evocation of Western myth (Lucas studied Joseph Campbell to find the most compelling and widespread myths suitable for reworking into the trilogy), and rests more on the Oedipal notions of a young man finding his power and defeating his father than on the rebellion; may we be saved from our struggles becoming the mere backdrop of such tired psychological dramas. *Star Trek*, for its part, at first tried to depict a future in which humanity was at peace, money was abolished, and race and gender had been surpassed. This was too boring; monstrous alien Others and new forms of resource exploitation and colonization had to be devised to keep interest in the show afloat. It is, in fact, now a perfect reflection of one trajectory our future may arrive at, a dystopian sort of peace in which capitalism no longer requires actual money. Successful myths in a bourgeois world must be bourgeois on some level. For those that succeed

e For an interesting exploration of this phenomenon and its justifications, see David Halperin's *Saint Foucault: Towards A Gay Hagiography*.

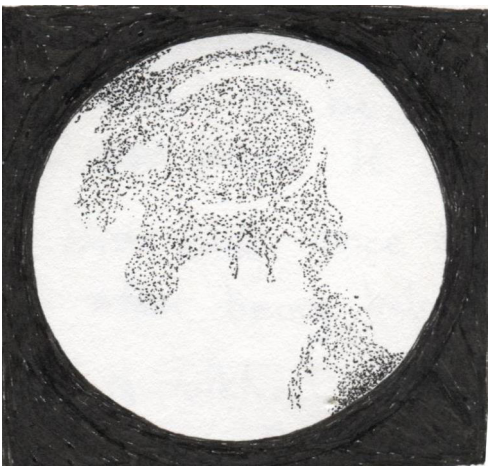
less, but depend upon a hero, suffering and death are the best-case scenarios for those heroes, real or fictional; this is why *Rebel One* is a good movie, but a bad *Star Wars* movie. It is no wonder that these myths are hard for people to want to emulate, at least in a manner beyond the purely aesthetic.

Most science fiction and fantasy is generated for the purposes of escape, but at its best it is something more than that—a way of actually engaging with reality. Imagining yourself as a better, more powerful person, with clearly evil enemies you can slay, new worlds to explore, and the camaraderie of the best and brightest—with the joy of difference made more explicit than it ever is in real life—is not an end to itself, but it can be a means towards finding the strength to exist, or even to struggle, in your own world. The challenge is to make these myths *complicated*. I owe my survival and the values that drive my participation in social struggle to such myths. I know I am not alone.

self-generated myths: speculations about the once and future community

> Everyone told me a different story about how the slaves began to forget their past. Words like 'zombie', 'sorcerer', 'witch', 'succubus', and 'vampire' were whispered to explain it. In these stories, which circulated throughout West Africa, the particulars varied, but all of them ended the same—the slave loses mother.
>
> —Saidiya Hartman

Those of us who live adrift in modernity exist within multiple universes at once, never home in any, always nostalgic for that which we have never had. Multiverse theory, at least in its speculative aspect, is a helpful way of thinking how we all exist within multiple true realities without losing our minds. Robert Heinlein codified the idea of *Story As Myth*—in his continuity, any story believed in strongly enough becomes real, a place you can go to if you have the right technology. His characters visit Oz, Burroughs' Mars, and many other famous fantasy landscapes. While so far we only have books and movies to transport us, they serve to create *the open*—the space in which is becoming is possible, as theorized by Derrida, Agamben, and, no less importantly, Delany. By questioning everything, by treating all the stories we live by as optional, science fiction can serve, as Haraway calls for, an "exploration of different articulations less marked by our culture of alterity and natureculture." Here is a short example.



לבֿנאָוועל

(*Levoneh,* moon)

A myth of the moon

by Eliui Meshunedik

Long, long ago, there rested the humble Earth and the powerful Sun. On the Earth lived the Moon, and on the Moon lived the *mayz* (mice) and other animals, who were allowed to roam free, and to mingle with the people of Earth. The Earth and the Moon had a powerful relationship: the Moon was always there for the Earth. It offered the Earth and its people great reflection and hope in times of darkness. And the Earth loved and adorned the Moon with praise of its wisdom and beauty through song and earthly art.

The Sun, seeing this, blazed with a blinding jealousy. It came down to the Earth proclaiming its own beauty, power, and importance, naming the dependency of every living creature in the system on the Sun. While this was true, the Sun's jealousy only reinforced the strong bond between the Moon and the Earth. The Sun scorched the Earth with its footsteps and spread lies about the Moon and all of its creatures. It told tales about how the *mayz* people controlled and held all of the Earth people from success; it claimed that within *mayz* people rests a valuable fortune of gold. Listening to the lies of the Sun, the Earth people grew violent against the Moon and all of its creatures. *Ketselekh* (kittens) were put in bags and thrown into rivers; *shof* (sheep) were crucified; *fresh* (frogs) were burned at the stake; the *mayz* people were chased and gutted for their gold, which was never found. The Moon wept with great sorrow, for the Moon knew that the Sun had spread these terrible rumours.

The violence did not subside. The people of earth turned away from the Earth and the Moon and worshiped the Sun and all of its power. The power of the Sun was so great that it ripped the Moon and the Earth apart. Seeing this, all of the animals of the Moon wept and ran towards the Moon, and leapt and climbed upon the departing body. The mayz people ran, being pursued by the earth people, but were too late. In a moment of grief, as the Sun pulled the Moon further and further away, the Moon cast a spell on the *mayz* people, turning them into mice in hopes of aiding their survival.

To this day, the Moon and the Earth, having been torn from one another, plead with the Sun, but to no avail. And the Moon sings to the Earth pulling tides and blankets of sky apart to see all the beauty of the Earth and the scar of what they once had, and to look upon the lost *mayz* people. And to this day the *mayz* people sing songs of longing and sorrow to the Moon and, like two ships signaling at sea, the Moon responds, waxing and waning. Now, every year the distance between the Moon and the Earth grows greater and greater, for there is nothing more whole than a broken heart.

This is a myth about the separation of Jews from the human community. While the United States teaches its children about the Shoah as if it were an aberration, a momentary insanity, this myth is in fact a two thousand year old story, ritually reenacted in pogroms and expulsions for centuries. By reconceptualizing it as an explicit myth, the author gives it a distance which creates space for play. Perhaps *play* seems like too frivolous a word for its topic; but it is precisely this history-as-game, codified versions of age-old hatreds and murders, that can give us mental and emotional enough space to outwit our very real predicaments. This play can serve us as a tactic, as a methodology, and even as a worldview. This is Donna Haraway's explicit project, her reason for using science fiction in tandem with "real" science and philosophy—and it is an accessible project we can all take up.

In their evocation of the Moon and Moon peoples, Meshunedik also speaks to the alien status Jews have acquired in Western culture: the permanent wanderer and outcast, a people of the night, whose fate waxes and wanes with time. They here draw upon a science fiction tradition: Leonard Nimoy, a Jew, modified a gesture used by Jewish *Kohanim* to refer to the Name of God to create the Vulcan gesture that calls for long life and prosperity. Nimoy was cast in his famous role as Spock specifically because his appearance seemed *fundamentally alien* to the Gentile producer—saturnine, wise, disciplined, but slightly beyond the reach of humanity. (He was originally supposed to have red skin, but that plan was abandoned because red skin looks black on black-and-white televisions—alien is one thing, black is another!) The tension between Spock and his human comrades, as they seek to know each other through their difference, forms one of the most compelling elements of *Star Trek*.

Self-generated myth can expand or redefine our knowledge of ourselves as revolutionary protagonists. For example, the French revolution of 1848 marked a shift for revolutionists from a simplistic populist rhetoric to a self-knowledge as the revolutionary subject, as the working class emerged on the Paris barricades. However, this impulse can quickly go astray. In his introduction to *Homage to Catalonia*, Lionel Trilling exemplifies Orwell as the virtuous man who refuses his station: a moment of hero formation around someone who refused heroism—*for that very reason*. Trilling is not wholly unaware of the irony, but it does not stop him.

These fictions are dangerous. If we view ourselves as the players of a carefree revolutionary game, we may be devastated by the very real consequences; if we become obsessed with stories we have outgrown, we may become our

enemies. Destruction is sometimes called for, however, and a powerful myth is like a social wrecking ball. Alan Moore, an acclaimed mythologist, anarchist and magician who worships a semi-fictional ancient god:

> We forget what power these things originally had. The bardic tradition of magic, whereby if someone puts a curse on you, it may sour your milk for a month, or burn your house down... Someone puts a satire on you that will destroy you in the eyes of your friends, in the eyes of your family, if not your own eyes. If it's a particularly good satire that's well worded and funny and clever, then five hundred years after you are dead, people will still be laughing at what a shit you were. That is destroyed. That's not just making your cow sick. People understood that as a real power, which, of course, it is. There are books that have devastated continents, destroyed thousands. What war hasn't been a war of fiction? All the religious wars, certainly, or the fiction of communism versus the fiction of capitalism—ideas, fictions, shit that people make. They have made a vast impression on the real world. It is the real world. Are thoughts not real?
>
> ...That is why magic is a broader map to me. It includes science. It's the kind of map we need if we are to survive psychologically in the age that is to come, whatever that is. We need a bigger map because the old one is based on an old universe where not many of us live anymore. We have to understand what we are dealing with here, because it is dangerous. It kills people. Art kills.

Saidiya Hartman's evocative, beautiful, densely horrifying work *Lose Your Mother* is often a meditation on the mythologies of the past and how they affect her future. After meeting people in Ghana, the Sisala, whose mythology included the story of having cleverly escaped slavery, she reflects:

> The language of the triumphant was as different from the language of the conquered as that of the living from the dead. Although, like me, the Sisala were also the descendants of people who had been scattered, this event was not a source of pain but rather a source of pride. The past for them was a cause of hope, whereas I longed for a future that could be wrested from an irredeemable past. My present was the future that had been created by men and women in chains, by human commodities, by chattel persons. I tried often to envision a future in which this past had ended, and most often I failed.

But Hartman's bleak understanding of eternal slavery does not lead her to despair. Elsewhere, she wonders: "The narrative of the defeated never triumphs; like them, it ekes out an existence in the shadow of the victors. But must the story of the defeated always be a story of defeat? Is it too late to imagine that their lives might be redeemed or to fashion an antidote to oblivion? Is it too late to believe their struggles cast a shadow into a future in which they might finally win?"

Ultimately, she finds her true sense of affinity, family, and belonging in the shared desire for freedom, rather than any historical or ethnic unity. "...I didn't have faith in the serenity of dead slaves or trust that our offering could put an end to their sorrow. I envisioned the dead raging and dispirited, like us, waiting for a future in which all the slave marks would be gone. It was this mutual longing that bound our fate with theirs." As she considers the Sisala mythology in contrast to her own, she has a revelation: "Listening to the priest, I came to realize that it mattered whether the 'we' was called *we who become together* or *African people* or *slaves*, because those identities were tethered to conflicting narratives of *our* past, and, as well, those names conjured different futures." Hartman implicitly issues us a challenge: how can we write honest defeated narratives that nonetheless give us a means of attaining future freedom? How can our myths represent the true pain and sorrow that is woven into every story of an oppressed people or person, and yet not reify it as the once and future truth?

Nisi Shawl and Cynthia Ward, both SF authors, led a workshop called "Writing the Other" at a 90s science fiction convention that proved so popular that their handout was privately circulated between writers for a decade; it has been recently published as a stand-alone text. Most obviously, they are attempting to provide writers *not* coded as Other a way to write about such others, rather than a) doing a bad, stereotyped job of such, or b) making the "more ethical" choice to not write about people outside of their own experiences. More deeply, they are offering practical tools for making myth that neither looks away from painful history nor makes the future a mirror of the past: an actually daring goal, close to the breathless excitement at difference and courage for change that lives at the heart of the best science fiction.

Shawl and Ward argue that we have racist, sexist, or otherwise fucked thoughts and impulses because our reptile brains have learned from society to distrust those marked as Other. These routinized thoughts, they say, are an evolutionarily sound means of survival. Ideally, our forebrain collaborates

with our reptile brain, sorting and rationalizing its thoughts; but, "since routinized thinking permits shortcuts, it allows your conscious mind to be lazy... when the reptile brain sends prejudiced, erroneous information to a lazy forebrain, the lazy forebrain agrees with the reptile brain's assertion that, for example, all Muslims are terrorists." It is this reason that fascist, essentialist rhetoric can feel true—if it is directed against "those who are not like us," it appeals to our reptile brains. If it is the job of our forebrains to sort or dismiss these reptile brain impulses, fiction, by virtue of its multi-tiered appeal, may be a tool for rooting them out entirely by challenging our societal training and erasing the boundaries we have put up around "Other." Writing, the authors remind us, "is *considered* speech. It gives you the opportunity to write and revise. It gives you the opportunity to override the reptile brain and lazy forebrain" —and, perhaps, that of your audience.

Shawl and Ward ask us to consider what it means when we tend to write characters in "the unmarked state"—i.e., just like us, where "us" is constituted of those who have the social clout to have their work taken seriously, whose work reads as legitimate in the culture, which has historically meant those who are white, male, straight, and not poor. How identifiable even are "unmarked" characters whose center of normal is defined by white, capitalist, able-bodied, patriarchal society for any one in particular? How do they derange our sense of our own normalcy, and take away our sense of agency—how do they prevent us from becoming heroes? To address these faults in mythmaking, these authors recommend the use of *parallax* and *congruence* as literary tactics for showing difference: the former, characters reflecting on or demonstrating their difference in relation to one another by virtue of their different centers of normalcy; and the latter, characters who seem other, who are marked, nevertheless demonstrating a relatable similarity to the probable audience or to another character with whom they are relating. It is also important, they say, for the relationships between marked and unmarked characters to be one of equals, such that "neither exists to prove anything about the other." In a separate essay, Shawl quotes advice for writers to write from their own knowledge—but to always strive to know more—and encourages authors to put themselves in situations in which they are minorities, because "alienation is an essential part of any science fiction writer's education." This works well with Haraway's project: if we ignore difference, or refuse to seek it out, we can never have true understanding or closeness.

III. Dangers and possibilities facing liberatory myth

Action: Fierce Against the Men

One warm and rainy night, the faggots and their friends were gathered in one of their favorite cellars dancing and stroking each other gently.

Suddenly, the men, armed with categories in their minds and guns in their hands, appeared at the door. The faggots, true to their training for survival, scrammed out the back windows, up the alley and out into the anonymous night. The queens, unable to scram in their gold lame and tired of just surviving, stayed. They waited until boldness and fear made them resourceful. Then, armed with their handbags and their high heels, they let out a collective shriek heard round the world and charged the men. The sound, one never heard before, unnerved the men long enough for the queens to get out onto the streets. And once on the streets, their turf, mayhem broke out. The word went out and, from all over the devastated city, queens moved onto the streets, armed, to shout and fight. The faggots, seeing smoke, cautiously came out of hiding and joyously could hardly believe what they saw. Elegant, fiery, exuberant queens were tearing up the street, building barricades, delivering insults, daring the men.

So they joined the queens and for three days and three nights the queens and their friends told the men, in every way they knew how, to fuck-off.

—*The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions*

I know I'm not supposed to read too much into a movie like *Episode I: The Phantom Menace*, but when you're living with a 6-year-old whose entire generation role-plays and reiterates each and every line, you tend to sit up and take exception when what comes out of those innocent little mouths suggests some not-very-subtle ethnic stereotypes of simpletons and shysters. Let's just take the movie's chief comic relief, the popeyed, brainless Jar Jar Binks, who is, apparently, a black man in frog face. Nothing wrong with that, says Lucasfilm; this is science fiction. Except he's a froggy alien who talks, yet says nothing.

—Patricia Williams, "Racial Ventriloquism"

I saw this Jedi costume, and I was so ecstatic I ran out of breath. At last I had an idea of who I was, how to carry myself, and I had a way of being. And I had a reason for being.

—Samuel L. Jackson, who played Mace Windu in *Star Wars: Episode I*

The primary way for mythologists to resist this possibility is to critically examine and question the tendency of their myths towards essentialism. This is maybe impossible in its truest sense, given how myth functions as an appeal to transcendent truth. But if mythologists can avoid appealing to the natural ("Our society/understanding of gender/nature is sick/malformed/afflicted by parasites; if we can return to the Athenian/wild/healthy ways of interacting, our social interactions will be the way they are supposed to be") and valorizing the past ("Before civilization/capitalism/patriarchy, things were better, and we can return..."), they will have done better than most. At the least, they must avoid the temptation to create the Other—the impulse to decide upon categories of people who are essentially evil and to be feared, or to be found exotically, provocatively interesting. Challenging misogyny and racism is a start; to challenge the concepts of race and gender, without ignoring the historical context we inhabit, is better. Liberatory mythology must be centered on the present, on the experiences and dreams of the people who generate that mythology, and not on the myths or history of the society it seeks to defeat.

Mythologists must also resist the urge to uncritically glorify or condemn violence. Revolutionaries have made an argument for supporting violence in self-defense, about the necessity of responding vigorously to great social violence; others have argued that violence is an inherently ugly thing that shapes even those acting to defend themselves into an image of their enemy. Whichever rings truer, one must often make compromises to live. It is the elevation of violence itself by mythology as an inherently worthwhile, purifying, liberatory force that turns it into a tool appropriate to the brutality of fascism, while the mythology of pacifism is cynically used by power as a self-policing mechanism among oppressed people.[f] From a materialist perspective, violence is a tool that can be used by anyone, whether in self-defense or aggression, to destroy power or to enact it, though it will always be used most, most effectively, and at least cost by those who already possess power. Neither the use of violence, nor the categorical avoidance of violence, deserve to be elevated through mythology. No matter who uses it, violence is a terrible thing to suffer or to commit; liberatory mythologists must not encourage those who have not experienced it to think it is of inherent value, nor give high praise to those who use pacifism to justify their complicity with larger violent forces.

f For more on this, see *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, by Peter Gelderloos.

To avoid a possible turn towards fascism, mythology must be sure it is not founded upon reactionary insecurity, on a sense of inferiority: that it is not just another form of character armor. This may seem a sentimental assertion, but I found these themes again and again in my readings of fascists and their mythology. I believe this sense is the result of legitimate suffering that cannot find resolution with who truly caused it, and therefore finds its targets closer to home. I think it is close to the heart of abusers, of committed racists, of those who commit acts of misogynist and homophobic violence; I think it is often within the hearts of those who bear power, who grow to find affinity with bullying, torture, and brutality. This rather pathetic emotion—I got hurt, and someone is going to pay!—has had very large consequences when abstracted by the cloak of mythology. Revolutionists should closely examine their hearts for such sentiments, and those of their friends—and, most especially, their mythologies. This is not to make a psychological problem out of the justified anger of the oppressed; it is rather to encourage the expression of that anger against the social structures that imprison them, rather than against other victims of the same structures. We are all, of course, assemblages of power and oppression, so this becomes a rather complicated interpersonal question, particular to each circumstance.

The danger of winning.

George Orwell, as we saw earlier, wrote about his personal experience fighting alongside Spanish anarchists and communists against fascists in *Homage to Catalonia*. While he maintained an affection for anarchists and remained a lifelong socialist, he formed a deep hatred of all Communists for their role in the purging and repression of other revolutionary forces during the war. Late in life, horribly, he gave the British government a list of people he suspected to be Communists—a betrayal that cannot be justified, no matter how just his grievance. Meanwhile, his novels have become cultural icons in America and the U.K.; when one refers to, for example, the type of government surveillance that gathers lists of names, one is quite likely to say "Big Brother," an Orwellian concept. There are many other obvious examples of recuperated Leftist myth I could refer to (the myths around the U.S. black civil rights struggle, for example, celebrated each February by a state that continues to violently oppress its black "citizens"), but this one is remarkably neat. Many of us read *1984* and *Animal Farm* as teenagers, assumed Orwell's contributions were liberatory, and moved on. But it has been pointed out[g] that Orwell's ideas must in fact serve power—otherwise they would not be so popular, taught in every high school in the United States. What purpose

g *Benjamen Walker's Theory of Everything*: "The Bootlickers."

do they serve—to make us afraid of traditionally totalitarian power so we are less critical of other forms of power and more grateful for the scraps we get? Is it to prevent us from experimenting with forms of socialism, even ones of which the real Orwell would have approved?

Orwell was a complicated and somewhat contradictory person, which is to say that he was a person; *Homage to Catalonia* was a first-hand account, and is therefore equally complex, whereas *1984* and *Animal Farm* were works of mythic allegory, easily digestible by high-schoolers. He and his latter works have been flattened by history and power into a component of bourgeois mythology; he has been assimilated. This is the fate that awaits most, Barthes says: "...true, there are revolts against bourgeois ideology. This is what one generally calls the avant-garde. But these revolts are socially limited, they remain open to salvage [recuperation]... Whatever the violence of the provocation, the nature it finally endorses is that of 'derelict' man, not alienated man; and derelict man is still Eternal Man. There can be figures of derelict man which lack all order... This does not affect in any way the security of the Essences." We and our myths must walk the line between transmissible and indecipherable, between openness and illegibility; we must resist the urge to explain ourselves fully, except to those with whom we can really share.

This conundrum is most clearly visible for those operating as cultural producers on the margins of society, struggling simultaneously to voice and explore their truths as those unwanted by our culture while *avoiding* becoming desirable to it. This goes beyond "selling out", the older, sovereign form of this relation—these days, they no longer necessarily buy you; instead, they let you sell yourself laboriously, painfully, which will make your work all the more beautiful. Simply explaining who you are to your enemy, to detail how they have hurt you and how you have survived, is useful to them as they go on to exploit and dominate others. But this is not to condemn the urge entirely: sharing your experiences and hard-won wisdom with those also in struggle is a gift. Resisting transparency and monetization—or even agreeing that resistance is the right tactic, that being paid for what you have survived is wrong—is a difficult and necessary tension. Jasbir Puar offers a few key insights about modern societies of control exploit theoretical and cultural workers within marginalized fields, ensnaring them within their apparatus:

> The U.S. is reproduced as the dominant site of feminist inquiry through the use of intersectionality as a heuristic to teach difference. Thus, the euro-american bias of women's studies and history of feminism is

> ironically reiterated via intersectionality, eliding the main intervention of transnational and postcolonial feminist scholars since the 1990s, which has been, in part, about destabilizing the nation-centered production of the category WOC.
>
> A final concern is that intersectionality functions as a problematic reinvestment in the subject, in particular, the subject X. Rey Chow has produced the most damning critique of what she calls "poststructuralist significatory incarceration", seriously questioning whether the marginalized subject is still a viable site from which to produce politics, much less whether the subject is a necessary precursor for politics. "Difference" produces new subjects of inquiry that then infinitely multiplies exclusion in order to promote inclusion. Difference now proceeds and defines identity. Part of her concern is that poststructuralist efforts to attend to the specificity of Others has become one, a universalizing project and two, always beholden to the self-referentiality of the "center", ironic given that intersectionality has now come to be deployed as a call for and a form of anti-essentialism. The poststructuralist fatigue Chow describes is simple: Subject X may be different in content, but shows up, time and again, the same in form. (We can see this in the entrance of both "trans" identity and "disability" into the intersectional fray.)
> ...identification is a process; identity is an encounter, an event, an accident, in fact. Identities are multi-causal, multi-directional, liminal; traces aren't always self-evident.

Puar herself is an academic theoretician, and she does not offer clear pathways towards speaking truth or generating mythology that avoid these traps. Critique is always easier than creation; I do not have a simple proposal either.

The glory and the danger of myth is its ability to move us beyond the reality of our circumstances, to speak to our core beliefs and underlying emotions, to somehow transcend the bleakness of our surroundings: to become more than the sum of our parts. We have discussed the dangers and terrible possibilities of using mythology—but what are its liberatory potentials?

Mythology can spread solidarity, empathy, and fight loneliness.

> Heavenly Blue worried all the time. He worried about the bills and the roof that needed repairing and the strange men who always watched

the house and what the neighbors might do next and about Hollyhock's unhappiness. He worried most of all that he would go mad. His worrying got the bills paid and the roof fixed and drove the men away and calmed the neighbors down and helped Hollyhock be happier. And finally his worrying drove him mad. It was the madness of looking inward and being afraid. There had never been enough love and warmth around him and he thought he had gradually dried up inside. He wanted out but he did not know where out was.

Lilac and Pinetree and Moonbeam and Loose Tomato and Hollyhock gathered. They held Heavenly Blue for days, they let him cry and stare and slobber and scream and be silent. They paid the bills and looked after the roof and watched the street for strange men and talked to the neighbors and Hollyhock kept himself happy. Their house filled up with comfort and routine and gladness until Heavenly Blue could no longer resist and became response-able again.

—*The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions*

When Nnedi Okorafor was a child, she read white-dominated fantasy, the only thing available to her. "When I looked back... I noticed that I migrated towards those books that did not have human characters, because I could relate to those characters more than the white characters. I didn't see reflections of myself in what I was reading." The easiest takeaway from her experience—an experience I relate to—is that diversity in fiction is important, necessary to reflect a diverse audience. However, conversely: one can gain from the experience of relating to monsters and aliens the realization that, to dominant society, one is a monster, an alien. Not only can you identify and analyze a distorted reflection of yourself in the eyes of power, you can perhaps feel less alone and particular in your monstrosity—even bond with others over your exclusion, as well as what you have in common. This is a conflictual experience that is at least as important as the temporary comfort one can find in escapist fiction; which comfort, when one is marginalized, is also a radical experience... when society does not want you to survive. It is a tragedy that most people in our society do not have friends... but, like Oscar Wao, we can at least have books.

Mythology can advocate for disintegration.

There are many forces striving to hold our world together—the impulse to gain power and control over others, to have more resources than others,

to have respect and admiration, to somehow feel happy within this fraught context. In the heat of this constant push of competition for success, it can be a liberatory gesture simply to refuse to try to succeed: to fall apart: to disintegrate. Furthermore, if you oppose huge social structures, your task can feel daunting—there is no way to force them to collapse. However, you can encourage them to disintegrate through a change in belief. To do nothing to challenge the future is to choose to support it. *Night Vision*:

> ...in Blade Runner's vision of multi-culturalized amerikkka—the Afrikan population has vanished. There are masses of Latins and europeans and asians, but no Afrikans except the occasional extra, the face in the crowd. In the film, even the slave race of replicants is white. The Color Black has been eliminated in fantasy, in 'innocently' imagining the future. Truths that cannot be told yet in public, that still must be denied, leak out in imagination, in art. ...one of the underlying truths in the movie's subtext is that capitalism does raise up whole new classes to meet its economic needs by making new races and genders. But also, when these classes become obsolete to its needs or too dangerous—threatening slave rebellions—capitalism is prepared not only to repress them, but to transform or even eliminate them in their millions. *This is the battleground of our time and place*. [my italics]

We forget that money is a mythology; this is why Marx is still useful, despite his dusty and continual references to bolts of linen. He reminds us that we have all been forced to believe in it, and that it has real and deadly consequences for our lives—but it also depends on our joint belief. The USSR died because of huge economic and political factors and incompetent government, but also because not enough people believed in its myth for it to continue. There is an ideological war currently raging in the U.S. as patriots call upon the myth of America... through denigrating immigrants, the group of people who are mostly likely to be invested in it. If myths hold our whole world together, terrible parts and good, and if a lack of belief in them can threaten that cohesion, then we need to generate myths that give us strength while taking away strength from the things we oppose. To prevent the turn towards fascism, this revolutionary myth must also be a self-destructive one—a myth that does not believe it will carry on, a myth that will not just fade away some day but completely disintegrate when it is no longer conflictual, ethical, or able to sustain revolutionary dreams.

To realistically evaluate your circumstances is often to feel doomed; we cannot imagine how to move beyond them. Mythology can break this paralysis. Unrealistic hope can betray people, and leave them feeling worse than before—but it can also give them the power to transcend their circumstances and make their dreams reality. Simply to say that there could be something better than all of this is a step. Even if no world we could currently dream could be free from some serious ill, even if we cannot take a series of practical steps towards it and then see its realization in our lifetime, it is useful to dream other dreams than the worthless ones we are permitted to have. We must simply avoid living only for the utopian future and turning a blind eye to the necessary struggles of the present.

Andy Merrifield argues for the creation of "spaces of slippage, a narrow trail of permanent subversion. A space of slippage is a zone where the state's control has weakened or degenerated. It's a liberated autonomous realm in which new communes can bloom, in which the realm of the possible—another possible world—might be glimpsed... We might name any new space of slippage the realm of the really lived, the kingdom of our Being-in-possibility; or, if we journey long enough, stretch it out far and wide enough, we might call it the magical wonderland of somewhere." He means this literally, in the sense of temporary autonomous zones, Zapatista resistance, and other forms of living in resistance; but he is simultaneously calling for an act of willful imagination, the marriage of the material and mythical: magic. "Magical Marxism... lodges somewhere within the interstices of a liberated time and liberated space, between the right to free time and the right to free space, a space of self-affirmation and "self-unfolding," a space-time of autonomous activity, of intellectual, artistic, and practical endeavor." This call to enacting interstitial magic is a way to outwit the traps of reality that prevent utopia. Following Benjamin, Merrifield calls for a poetic politics, a "dialectical fairytale," for people to adopt a manner of living that is beautiful and an act of resistance at once. One might cynically remark that Marxists need this call more than most, but it is one at least as present in its geneaology (if in fits and starts) as boredom and work. More than anything, he says, we need "a new politics that has a touch of the magical, that brews up some new radical moonshine, a new potion for stirring up our critical concepts, for making us practically intoxicated, that dreams the unimaginable, that goes beyond merely what is, beyond all accepted rules and logic... a politics that has little to do with rationality or economic reason." It is easier to call for such creativity and magic than it is to produce it, but I agree with him. I only hope people can avoid adding the poison of essentialism to their mythological potions.

Mythology can generate and sustain resistance.

Saidiya Hartman:

> If after a year in Ghana I could still call myself an African American, it was because my Africa had its source in the commons created by fugitives and rebels, in the courage of suicidal girls aboard slave ships, and in the efforts, thwarted and realized, of revolutionaries intent upon stopping the clock and instituting a new order, even if it cost them their lives. For me, returning to the source didn't lead to the great courts and to the regalia of kings and queens. The legacy that I chose to claim was articulated in the ongoing struggle to escape, stand down, and defeat slavery in all its myriad forms. It was the fugitive's legacy. It didn't require me to wait on bended knee for a great emancipator. It wasn't the dream of a White House, even if it was in Harlem, but of a free territory. It was a dream of autonomy rather than nationhood. It was the dream of an elsewhere, with all its promises and dangers, where the stateless might, at last, thrive.

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If after a year in Ghana I could still call myself an African American, it was because my Africa had its source in the commons created by fugitives and rebels, in the courage of suicidal girls aboard slave ships, and in the efforts, thwarted and realized, of revolutionaries intent upon stopping the clock and instituting a new order, even if it cost them their lives. For me, returning to the source didn't lead to the great courts and to the regalia of kings and queens. The legacy that I chose to claim was articulated in the ongoing struggle to escape, stand down, and defeat slavery in all its myriad forms. It was the fugitive's legacy. It didn't require me to wait on bended knee for a great emancipator. It wasn't the dream of a White House, even if it was in Harlem, but of a free territory. It was a dream of autonomy rather than nationhood. It was the dream of an elsewhere, with all its promises and dangers, where the stateless might, at last, thrive.

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The Unquiet Dead

Anarchism, Fascism, and Mythology

7. Elitism, Populism, and Democracy

Like fascism and anarchism, elitism and populism are tragically interrelated. Either, I think, are tactical gestures, justified by social and emotional drifts; the tendency towards either pole seems to me to be primarily a function of the power dynamics we have inherited from our hierarchial, scarcity-oriented societies. Pluralistic democracy, which masquerades as the center, is its own tactic, and the form of power we are most used to living under; but its relative stability does not make it inevitable. In this section, we will explore the theoretical justifications and some of the material impacts of each as they have been used by fascists, anarchists, conservatives and Leftists.

Fascist movements come into being through a dialectical alignment of populism and elitism. They deploy an essentialist myth of the nobility of "the people"—which is never *all* of the people, but, rather, the model of the citizen that seems most desirable to fascist constituents. The fascist leader delivers a bitter critique of the real economic problems afoot, one more realistic than those given by the pluralistic center, and with a louder voice than the whole Left possesses... and argues that they must be resolved by identifying and destroying an Other. An elite class develops, both the controllers of "the people" and their admired heroes; this class, however, always stands the chance of being destroyed by populist rage intentionally deployed by the leader when a purge is necessary. Until then, their occasional dissent is precariously tolerated because heterogenity makes a stronger society; people working for their ideals, however terrible, are more creative than those drudging away under endless bureaucracy.

Elitism is fundamentally incompatible with egalitarianism, implying that some deserve a right to power over other people. Populism, meanwhile, often caters to an essentialist notion of "the people", tending to suppress difference. Elements of both elitism and populism, however, are both tactically employed by anarchists, even to disrupt the dynamics of populism and elitism that facilitate fascist momentum and power, as well as the false calm of alleged pluralism. This use must always remain contingent and critiqued; we must not mistake the way for the destination. This is most true of the false consensus of democracy, a tempting shortcut that becomes a session of riddles in the dark.

We will begin by considering the uses of Friedrich Nietzsche's writings by both anarchists and fascists as a way to think about the advantages and disadvantages of the elitist tactic. His work is self-contradictory, and no less the uses to which it has been put. I will explore his readings and motivations in depth, and consider whether a man whose work is poisoned by essentialism is *essentially* useless to movements for liberation... or if his development of anti-essentialist theoretical frameworks may redeem him from his material guilt in dooming those he believed were chosen.

Part I. Nietzsche and elitism: a tragic prophecy

> The future of the Nietzsche text is not closed. But if, within the still-open contours of an era, the only politics calling itself—proclaiming itself— Nietzschean will have been a Nazi one, then it is necessarily significant and must be questioned in all of its consequences.
>
> —Jacques Derrida

> The struggle against the Jews has always been a symptom of the worst characters, those more envious and more cowardly. He who participates in it now must have much of the disposition of the mob.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche

Of all Friedrich Nietzsche's students, anarchists, fascists, and Jews of various politics have been perhaps the most dedicated to his words. Nietzsche himself was none of these things; indeed, he seemed to hold anarchism in some contempt and hated both the nationalism and the anti-Semitism that would become the heart of German fascism. Despite this, anarchists, particularly individualists, have been taking his words to heart since he wrote them. And, while he famously broke with Wagner's proto-fascist milieu over their nationalism and anti-Semitism, this did not prevent the Nazis from claiming him as their own. They were aided in this enterprise by Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, his unscrupulous sister, who not only delivered his private documents to Hitler but suppressed the parts of his writing that were most sympathetic to Jews, editing his work into its most palatable form for the fascist appetite. Mussolini and many other fascists, then and now, cite him as a major influence. Meanwhile, intellectual Jews in and around Germany quoted Nietzsche in their letters about survival during the mounting anti-Semitic tensions: "What doesn't kill me makes me stronger." Horribly, Goebbels used the same phrase in a speech he gave celebrating the tenth anniversary of the National Socialist rise to power.

My purpose is to identify how people were able to politically theorize their fascist, anarchist, or Leftist positionalities from Nietzsche's work. I will lead with a lengthy consideration of Nietzsche's personal political convictions and actions, as in this case the person is integral to the argument; I will also briefly explore how Jews—the central topic of these debates, who have so often suffered their bloody consequences—have related to him and his work, then and now. I find that, while Nietzsche's intentions may well have been born from the finest of impulses, his net impact has been harmful, poisoned at its base by his reliance upon essentialism. This is the basic difficulty of

the ally. Still, his innovation of *joyous nihilism* and a genealogical approach to history are major contributions; and, as nothing is pure, they are not wholly condemned by association.

Nietzsche and anti-Semitism

> "I want all anti-Semites shot."
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche in one of his last recorded statements, usually taken as a sign of his madness

The question of Nietzsche as an anti-Semite is a complex one. It seems that Nietzsche was "casually anti-Semitic" before he made friends with Paul Rée, who was Jewish, in 1873; this caused him to rethink his position and eventually to break with Richard Wagner, the well-known proto-fascist and composer. From that point forward, the anti-Semitic intellectuals around Nietzsche served as his chief opponents, and often appear as characters in his work. In 1876, Nietzsche wrote that "Wagnerites were leading 'the Jews to the slaughterhouse' as scapegoats for Germany's misfortunes"; continuing the Abrahamic animal metaphors, Nietzsche called Christian anti-Semites "little, good-natured, absurd sheep with horns" who possessed "little herd animal virtues."[a]

Unfortunately, anti-racist intention has never kept people from being materially racist. Nietzsche wrote, for example, "We would as little choose early Christians as Polish Jews to associate with us: not that one would need to have even a single objection to them... Both of them simply do not smell good." While this was meant as an insult to the mythological holiness of early Christians, it was hardly a decent thing to say about Jews; and, far from incidental, is par for the course of Nietzsche's well-intentioned but tone-deaf attacks upon anti-Semites. More fundamentally, it is quite easy to read Nietzsche as arguing for a racial basis for superiority and inferiority. He discusses the ebbs and flows of migrants, ancient and modern, as racial forces that shape culture; he read Lamarck, Malthus, and Herbert Spencer, all of whom contributed to the rise of Social Darwinism. His work is not only inflected by essentialism—it is founded upon it.

Nietzsche's work "The becoming-pure of a race," his study and valorization

a From Nietzsche's letters and *Will to Power*, quoted by Santaniello in Golomb. Nietzsche added in the letter: "I draw conclusions and know already that my 'Will to Power' will be suppressed first in Germany." He did not foresee how his work would be used to justify fascism, could not intuit the frothy mix of populism and elitism that would fill the hole of Nazi philosophy.

of ancient Greece, is most troubling—while he acknowledges that there is no original racial "purity," that all ethnic groups are the result of intermixing, he suggests that they may "become pure," and that the Greeks did so in counterpoint, even in resistance, to Semitic influence. His five points on this subject, as summarized by Cancik:

1. The races are not originally pure but, at best, become pure in the course of history.
2. The crossing of races simultaneously means the crossing of cultures: crossing leads to "disharmony" in bodily form, in custom and in morality.
3. The process of purification occurs through "adapting, imbibing, [and] excreting" foreign elements.
4. The result of purification is a stronger and more beautiful organism.
5. The Greeks are "the model of a race and culture that had become pure."

Jacob Golomb has tried to defend Nietzsche from the most obvious reading of this framework:

> The fact is that Nietzsche was very far from delineating a racial typology. In this respect it is revealing that his own historical examples of societies that approximated "the essential characteristic of a good and healthy aristocracy" were the ancient Greek *polis*... ...He also refers in this context to the historical examples of ancient Rome and of the Italian Renaissance—namely to cultural patterns that never made racial supremacy the cornerstone of their non-nationalist ideals or never regarded the genetic features of particular persons as an *a priori* mark of creativity or superiority.

This is a revisionist argument. Race wasn't fully constructed in the days of ancient Greece and Rome, nor was genetic inheritance much understood—so, yes, those societies did not racially theorize in the way that European and American society of the last several centuries have done. They were, however, predominantly white societies which depended upon slavery (though of people whom we would today perceive to be of all races) and misogyny—which is certainly founded in a perception of essential difference. Nietzsche's very reliance on Greece and Rome as a basis for his idea of the "good life" is not only boring, but constitutes complicity in the creation, transmission, and violence of the construct of white European patriarchy. The fact that Nietzsche is far from alone in this does not excuse him.

David Ohana assesses: "Like the Germans in Nietzsche's time, the Greeks had been in danger of being inundated by foreign cultures, losing their authenticity and disappearing into history. The victory of the Greek culture over the foreign cultures serve Nietzsche as an analogy for his age in that it provided an example of man overcoming his alienation through his own efforts." Little wonder Nazis were able to interpret these examples to their own ends, founded as they are in premises of borders, nations, and cultural/racial integrity; in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler described Aryan culture as a "synthesis of the Greek culture with German technology," a legacy of this approach. Golomb, however, defends Nietzsche against accusations of essentialism by saying that if he were essentialist, he would depict the victors of history as the deserving; Nietzsche instead says that morality and superiority are something created and have to be freely constructed. This is a real point, and perhaps Nietzsche's most valuable contribution. However, it does not match the damage he did by reifying races as real things, in perhaps well-meaning but incredibly damaging ways; by separating the world into the few superior and many inferior, thus leaving himself open to misinterpretation by those who would like to be superior; and his use of victim-blaming racial "metaphor" to do all this.

At times, Nietzsche seems to be against the idea of mixing races, finding it an outcome of "epoch[es] of dissolution, which mixes up the races"; mixes are sterile, and can persist only if "supplied with fresh blood." At best, he operates within a sort of clinical breeding model, arguing for the intermarriage of Jews and Germans for the betterment of both ethnicities. It is easy to see how his ideas could become a justification for eugenics, as we know they did. It is, at the least, a deeply irresponsible argument—if he cared for the fate of the Jews, he should not have affirmed the notion that the Jews were a distinct race that Germans should fear. This kind of racialized historical narrative founded in essentialism stands out to me as Nietzsche's biggest fault. Steven Aschheim tells us:

> The philosopher had, after all, endowed the Jews with a world-historical stain, the stain that his entire philosophy sought to uncover, diagnose and overcome. It was *On the Genealogy of Morals* that held the "priestly people" responsible for nothing less than beginning "the slave revolt in morality: that revolt which has a history of two thousand years behind it and which we no longer see because it has been victorious." And as Nietzsche put it in *The Antichrist*, the Jews, with their desire to survive at any price, were nothing less than "the most catastrophic people of world history. Their sin was inconceivably heinous for they had radically falsified

> all nature, all naturalness, all reality, of the whole inner-world as well as the outer . . . out of themselves they created a counterconcept to natural conditions: they turned religion, cult, morality, history, psychology, one after the other, into an incurable contradiction to their natural values. . . by their aftereffect they have made mankind so thoroughly false that even today the Christian can feel anti-Jewish without realizing that he himself is the ultimate Jewish consequence."

Nietzsche here was foregrounding his attack on Christianity's "slave morality" by critiquing its ancestry in ancient Judaism. It was not clear at the time (nor is it universally agreed today) that race, religion, and culture are separate considerations; even Marx, who was Jewish, argues in "On the Jewish Question" that Jews must abolish Judaism, as well as their historic role as bankers (by Marx's description) in order to work towards their own and general freedom. Nietzsche, for his part, does not make the distinction between culture, race, and religion, or between ancient and modern Jews at all clear in his critique. By these lights, the Nazi use of Nietzsche to justify their systemic murder of Jews is entirely intuitive—"natural."

Weaver Santaniello writes to defend Nietzsche's good name. She asserts he was writing strictly against "priestly Judea," meaning both the ancient priests themselves and those who relied upon them to mediate their experience of God, to interpret all matters along the lines of good and evil. Nietzsche was against the idea of the Messiah, and against waiting for him; he proposed creating a generation of those who chose to save themselves, the *ubermensch*, as a sort of mythological replacement, a way to fill the Messiah-shaped hole in the hearts of Jews and Christians. Santaniello claims that Nietzsche was in fact arguing against racist essentialism. "In the texts [of the *Genealogy*], Nietzsche severs the Germanic bloodline *from* Aryan humanity ("between the old Germanic tribes and us Germans there exists hardly a conceptual relationship, let alone one of blood"), proclaims mixed races instead... and exalts the Jews over Germans." Moreover, Santaniello claims Nietzsche was intentionally needling his anti-Semitic Christian opponents by describing Jesus, Peter, Paul and Mary as Jews. If this characterization of his intentions on both levels is accurate, it is an ironic insult that he has been portrayed since his death as an anti-Semite.

Santaniello tells us that *The Antichrist*, another Nietzsche text which is often read as anti-Semitic, was written in explicit and angry response to Renan's *The Life of Jesus*, a text that sought to portray Jesus as the world's break from Judaism and his death as the justification for anti-Semitism. Nietzsche argued

instead that *ressentiment* began with the death upon the cross, and reached its heights when the disciples misunderstood Christ's message that sin, guilt and punishment have been abolished and that the kingdom of heaven is within. Anti-Semites, he said, are those most likely to embody *ressentiment*. He ranted against "the antisemites who today roll their eyes in a Christian-Aryan bourgeois manner," and called anti-Semites "moral masturbators" and "hangmen" who represent the "will to power of the weakest": "They are all men of *ressentiment*, physiologically unfortunate and work-eaten... inexhaustible and insatiable in outbursts against the fortunate and happy."

These fierce words presented a problem for many of his readers. Aschheim says: "Volkische anti-Semites interested in annexing Nietzsche had to contend with the knowledge that he was no nationalist, indeed was perhaps the most pronounced critic of his contemporary Germans, and above all the most outspoken opponent of the anti-Semitic 'swindle.' Turning around the very basis of his notion of *ressentiment* he even branded the herd, mass movement of anti-Semitism as itself a kind of slave revolt."[b]

On the one hand, Nietzsche argued for the expulsion of anti-Semites from society in support of the Jewish desire for a home in Europe. On the other, Nietzsche also saw Jews as embodiments of *ressentiment*, co-generating their oppression by their refusal to assimilate, by their belief that they are both God's chosen *and* the most oppressed people on earth. He says:

> Psychologically considered, the Jewish people are a people endowed with the toughest vital energy, who, placed in impossible circumstances, voluntarily act out of the most profound prudence of self-preservation, take sides with all the instincts of decadence—*not* as mastered by them, but because they divined a power in these instincts with which one could prevail against "the world." The Jews are the antithesis of all decadents: they have had to *represent* decadents to the point of illusion; with a *non plus ultra* of historic genius they have known how to place themselves at the head of all movements of decadence (as the Christianity of *Paul*), in order to create something out of them which is stronger than any *Yes-saying* part of life.

b Remember—in Nietzsche's worldview, "slave revolts" are negative happenstances, a system of terminology I find fundamentally distasteful; I do not care for the idea that the slaves are to blame for their chains, and it is not as if actual slavery was not afoot as he was writing. He should have known better. However, in his schema, "slaves" are those who bear slave morality, revolting against those who are superior to them in spirit; they are more likely to be resentful people who are *legally* free, if emotionally bound.

By Gilman's analysis, Nietzsche is here inverting and attacking the anti-Semitic analysis of his peers. "If the anti-Semites need to see the Jew as the essence of decay, Nietzsche, placing himself in the role of the opposition *per se*, must see in the imposed isolation of the Jew a source of strength. Nietzsche is thus not a philo-Semite but rather an anti-anti-Semite." Like so many would-be allies, Nietzsche identified personally with the constructed Other. This is a trap. There is a sort of subtle, magical empathy that can build solidarity while respecting difference; far more common on the part of the ally, sadly, is a conflation of experiences in the service of personal identity that becomes a violent betrayal. Here, for example, Nietzsche sees the Jews "taking sides with all the instincts of decadence" as a powerful nihilist innovation, a rejection of the world and the beginning of its destruction... which Nietzsche appreciates. The fascist project, meanwhile, is to restore nature to culture and move out of decadence, and Nietzsche concurs with this aim as well; he feels that civilization causes man to oppress himself with internalized state values, for want of external enemies. You cannot have your cake and eat it too: should we return the world to a (itself mythical) natural state of pure war, or should we destroy the social relations with which we are oppressing ourselves? Nietzsche's project, by asserting an identification with and therefore caricature of the Jewish experience, falsely positioned Jews as the vanguard of the nihilist project that fascists saw as their first opponent in their war for the world. Yovel:

> These two human types, apparently so opposed to each other – the anti-Semite and the Jewish priest – are actually geneaological cousins: they share the same deep-psychological pattern of *ressentiment* which Nietzsche's philosophy diagnoses at the basis [sic] of human meanness and degeneration. ...Rhetorically... the anti-Semite learns [from Nietzsche's work] that, at bottom, he has the same psychology as his worst enemies in their worst period, and this is supposed to shock the anti-Semite into disgust – perhaps at himself. However, by using anti-Semitic images ostensibly against themselves Nietzsche is playing with fire.

By ironically juxtaposing the men of *ressentiment*, anti-Semites and ancient Judaic priests alike, Nietzsche hoped to show the necessity of rejecting slave morality—but, in an horribly ironic twist, his aim was easily missed by those actually possessed of *ressentiment*, who chose to see only their own perspectives, taking the anti-Semitic parts and ignoring the rest.

Nietzsche defines *ressentiment* so:

> The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of natures that are denied the true reaction, that of deeds, and compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge. While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is "outside", what is "different", what is "not itself"; and this No is its creative deed.

It is not clear to me why Nietzsche did not simply call for "the true reaction of deeds"—the revolutionary's response to situations that could otherwise produce *ressentiment*. If not this, then what would the opposite of *ressentiment* be? Is the idea of human strike—to simply abandon the sort of care and creative commitment that makes one's labor more than minimally productive—beyond him?[c] This is a major inadequacy of his argument. But I, too, have found *ressentiment* (which I think of as the sense of resentment borne out of a simultaneous faith in one's innate superiority and inferior treatment within the world) emotionally foundational to fascism... although, as Nietzsche observes above, it can be a powerful source of temporary strength for oppressed groups or people surviving difficult situations.[d] Still, Aschheim's presentation of Nietzsche's attitude tempts me to see him not as an anti-Semite, nor as a fascist—but rather as a predecessor of that tired modern character: the would-be ally who doesn't *get it*, yet feels utterly empowered to speak anyway. Of the vast number of people who fall within this category, Nietzsche may have the most blood on his hands. "Nazism, wrote Heinrich Römer in 1940, was indebted to Nietzsche's pivotal insight that Israel had de-naturalized natural values. The clear implication was that National Socialism had to be regarded as the countermovement leading to renaturalization." This affirms my notion that fascism is an expression of offended essentialism re-asserting itself—this time, in reaction to "unnatural" Jews and modernity. While Nietzsche was not the originator of that discourse, and engaged in it with only oppositional intentions, he was complicit in their destruction on that basis.

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c While human strike was not theorized as such until fairly recently, Herman Melville's story "Bartleby, The Scrivener", a touchstone for potentiality nerds and human strike aficionados, was published in the 1850s.

d Jean Amery's Auschwitz memoir *At The Mind's Limits* is a lovesong to the importance of resentment, to refusing to forgive, to not becoming healthy and whole, and I do not see how anyone could gainsay him.

His positive proposals were not better. In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche proposed the racial/cultural assimilation of Jews into Germany, so that their "superior" characteristics could be bred into the German people. Cancik:

> [Nietzsche] thought, one could—'with great care' and 'with selectivity' cross an intelligent Jewish woman with an 'aristocratic officer from the Mark' (i.e., a Prussian aristocratic officer). In this manner, one could 'breed in' some intellect to the 'already strongly molded character of the new Teutonic'. The valuable elements of Judaism, which Nietzsche was able to praise generously in this context, would be absorbed and assimilated in the new Europe; whatever disturbed would be 'excreted'.
>
> In this manner, the new European race would be purified and a new caste ruling over Europe cultivated. The 'Greek model' that Nietzsche had developed in his classical studies was proving its value for planning the racial, cultural and political future of Europe. The programmatic anti-Semitism was to be surpassed through Nietzsche's tasteful solution of the problem, precisely that solution acceptable to an intellectual aristocracy.

While Golomb claims that many Jews were "grateful to Nietzsche for his naïve advocacy of the mating of Prussian nobility and Jewish intelligentsia," to a modern reader it seems a rather explicit call for a eugenics program, however well-intentioned. This coldly-phrased breeding proposal highlights Nietzsche's reliance on the conflation of racial and cultural forces; paints assimilation as the only desirable goal; still advances Germans towards a long-term goal of racial purity; and, backhandedly, helped to terrify true anti-Semites into reaction—all at once!

As to the last, Nietzsche was generally unafraid to catastrophize the political fate of Jews, saying: "Among the spectacles to which the coming century invites us is the decision as to the destiny of the Jews of Europe. That their die is cast, that they have crossed their Rubicon, is now palpably obvious: all that is left for them is to either become the masters of Europe or to lose Europe." This is the most irresponsible kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, even if it came out of deep personal concern for Jews. Read most sympathetically, it is a cruel irony that these sorts of statements were used by his opponents to justify their infamy. Santaniello argues that it is yet more than that:

> ...my position is contrary to those positions which assume that the Nazis "liked" Nietzsche, that they learned from him and/or that

> they "misunderstoood" him. I rather hold that the Nazis understood Nietzsche extremely well and that is precisely why they sought to destroy him—and sever a vital part of Jewish history. The Nazis did not "like" Nietzsche, they were repulsed and enraged by him precisely *because* he upheld the Jews and dared to defy many intellectual forerunners of the Third Reich: namely, Richard and Cosima Wagner, Renan, Dühring, Lagarde, Chamberlain, Gobineau, Stocker, Förster and Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche. The Nazis' use of Nietzsche was not based on any "misinterpretation" or "selective appropriation," it was based on a twisted sense of spite and was an act of retaliation.... The Nazis may have fooled the world, but they did not fool the Jews. According to Steven Aschheim, German Jewish leaders looked to Nietzsche and Nietzschean folk wisdom for consolation while suffering under the Nazi regime, often quoting Nietzsche's famous phrase: "What does not destroy me makes me stronger."

Did this recursively tragic reliance on one of Nietzsche's quotable phrases facilitate the cooperation of German Jewish leaders with the Nazi state, accepting the death of some as the price that must be paid for the safety of many? I do not wish to blame these victims, but their terrible dilemma is known, documented, mourned. Their gamble did not pay off.

Nietzsche and Jews

> You have committed one of the greatest stupidities—for yourself and for me! Your association with an anti-Semitic chief expresses a foreignness to my whole way of life which fills me again and again with ire or melancholy... It is a matter of honor with me to be absolutely clear and unequivocal in relation to anti-Semitism, namely, opposed to it, as I am in my writings.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche to his sister, Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche

> There is something insulting about being understood.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche

Eugen Dühring was a "heroic materialist," and a particularly vicious anti-Semitic intellectual. Engels wrote an essay against him; Dühring's very existence convinced Herzl of Zionism—European Jews must escape to Israel if dealing with people like him was the alternative. Nietzsche hated him. According to Santaniello, Dühring is Nietzsche's opponent in *Thus Spake Zarathrusta*, as well as in the second and third essay of the *Geneaology*. Nietzsche

developed the idea of the *ubermensch* specifically to contrast with the "masses of barbarian forces" he felt were represented by Dühring's ignorance, which he termed "the new terrorism." Indeed, many of Dühring's followers later became superiors in the SS, and his 1881 work *The Jewish Question as a Problem of Race, Morals and Culture* presented an almost complete Nazi program of Jewish genocide. Dühring is exemplary of the kind of men Nietzsche stood against in his lifetime, both in theory and in practice. It is horribly remarkable, then, that these men—vicious opponents in their day—would be married to the same task in their death, and Nietzsche forever tainted by his enemy's ideology. But, in the lives of Jews, was Nietzsche substantially different than his enemy?

By Sander Gilman's assessment, Nietzsche periodized Jewish history into epochs, and had a different opinion of each. "Nietzsche perceived three moments in the natural history of the Jew: the Jew as the prophet of the Old Testament, serving the angry and holy *Jehovah*; the Jew as the archetypal wandering Christian (Saul/Paul), weak and destructive; and the Jew as contemporary, the antithesis of all decadence, self-sufficent and incorruptible." Leaving aside for a moment the relative characteristics Nietzsche imposed upon each, Gilman continues:

> ...all three of these images serve as stereotypes of difference which are, in the last analysis, negative in that they reduce the perception of a group of single individuals to the generalities of a class. The search for the source and structure of these images of Otherness forces the reader of Nietzsche to the foundation of Nietzsche's own sense of self, for it is in terms of his sense of Otherness that the boundaries of his own self were drawn.

This is a great insight. Even insofar as Nietzsche wrote in defense of Jews, in passionate identification with their Othered status, so did he reaffirm the essentialism that murdered them. It is this essentialism I see and condemn at the heart of Nietzsche's anti-Semitism. To say that because a people are a thing they have always been and will carry on being a thing is to make the following essentialist errors: to see "a people" as a single, united force, that can be described with broad generalizations; to imagine that their so-defined character has had the same impact on all "peoples" they have encountered thoroughout world history; and to imagine that cultural and racial characteristics are tied to and influence each other.

Berel Lang attempts to apologize for Nietzsche's position:

> ...the inequality that Nietzsche identifies among individuals is not innate or fixed for them either as individuals or as members of a group. This does not mean that their constitution by nature is irrelevant, but that what is decisive is what the individual or the group strives for and achieves—a function of decision and action, not of 'hard-wiring.' As individuals create themselves, so do groups—nations, peoples, or what count for Nietzsche as 'races.'[e]

I am somewhat sympathetic to this framing, if it is an accurate interpretation of Nietzsche's ideas, as it explains the seeming-similarities among members of a culture or community without attributing them to literal race or biology—and, in this case, is done in a positive manner. I would feel far less sympathetic if it were done negatively to members of an oppressed group, which is perhaps hypocritical of me... but power is real. On the whole, it is still reminiscent of Lamarckian pseudoscience: the idea that small biological changes are made in people by their life experiences and passed to their descendants in ways beyond the cultural or material—i.e., if your parents lived in poverty, its effects will show in your body, even if you received adequate nutrition while growing up, were not abused, did not get a larger dose of stress hormones than usual in utero, and so on. This is a contested argument, as it is nearly impossible to isolate cases for study in this way from their surrounding circumstances—and because biological arguments have been so often used by power for political purposes. This sort of thing will rarely end well, especially when attempted by those outside the group in question. This case was no exception; Nietzsche also said things like this: "Life itself recognizes no solidarity, no 'equal rights', between the healthy and the degenerate parts of an organism: one must excise the latter—or the whole will perish." He presents this "fact" as grounded in uncontestable science—that is, a way of thinking about evolution and adaptation that has been recently undermined by feminist biologists who point to collaborative, symbiotic forms of evolutionary change, who speculate that competition and survival of the fittest may be only footnotes to these more common biological processes.[f] Moreover, this sentence appears in *The Will to Power*, published after his own mental and physical health became compromised... which gave his fascist sister the rights to his estate and papers. Appeals to nature to justify exercises of power in the social realm are not advised.

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e Footnote 2, Brinker in Wistrich 124, also helpfully elucidates Nietzsche's idea of race.

f See Lynn Margulis's large body of work on this subject; Donna Haraway; many others.

These sorts of errors are obvious in Nietzsche's epitomization of Paul as "the most typical Jew" of his era: "Paul is the characteristic product of the Jewish spirit of *ressentiment*, typical of slave-morality in general," as Brinker summarizes Nietzsche's position, and the Christianity he developed is not only his fault but the fault of his people. But things similarly went awry with Nietzsche's most "positive" portayal of Jews. In *The Antichrist*, he portrays ancient Jews conducting a religious "slave-rebellion": as Brinker puts it, "Protected by their lack of faith and by the ghetto walls, the Jews were sending a paralyzing new faith to the Gentiles to avenge the wrong done to them by their conquerors. ...the Jews were incapable of a simple belief in God." Thus Jews were always sneaky, underhanded, and treacherous in Nietzsche's eyes, however positively he may have interpreted those traits. As for Diasporic Jews, according to Yovel, Nietzsche admires them "because they have demonstrated the power of affirming life in the face of suffering and drawn force from it. Moreover, Diaspora Jews have the merit of having rejected Christ and served as a constant critic and counterbalance to Christianity." Elsewhere, Yovel considers that Jews replaced Wagner in Nietzsche's internal cosmology as those who would "serve as catalyst in Europe's revival from decadence". He quotes Nietzsche:

> In the darkest times of the Middle Ages... it was Jewish free-thinkers, scholars, and physicians who clung to the banner of enlightenment and spiritual independence in the face of the harshest personal pressures... We owe it to their exertions, not least of all, that a more natural, more rational, and certainly unmythical explanation of the world was eventually able to triumph again.

And, in Nietzsche's present:

> The Jews, however, are beyond any doubt the strongest, toughest and purest race now living in Europe; they know how to prevail even under the worst conditions (even better than under favorable conditions), by means of virtues that today one would like to mark as vices – thanks above all to a resolute faith that need not be ashamed of "modern ideas."

Nietzsche here celebrates Jewish virtues he claims were developed through their exclusion and/or self-imposed isolation, yet simultaneously calls upon them to assimilate, to lose their religion, to continue to advance modern ideas and cosmopolitan virtues. This was the double-bind for European Jews in this particular historic moment—caught between the need to preserve their communities in the face of anti-Semitic repression, and the urge some felt

to assimilate. Assimilation was driven by the need to escape such repression and the need to break away from their traditionally religious communities. Nietzsche's affirmation of this predicament fell upon listening ears. He praised Jewish wit, intelligence, shrewdness, money, patience, ability to withstand suffering, self-possession, and heroism—and, in a time of intense anti-Semitism, few took offense at the stereotypical or backhanded nature of some of these compliments.

This happened in several directions. Many "marginal" German Jews, who wanted neither to assimilate into Christian culture nor take up politics, but felt no longer at home within the ghetto, found strength and direction from Nietzsche's philosophy: Freud, Kafka, Benjamin, and many other luminaries were among them. Golomb quotes Franz Werfel on the predicament of Jews of that time and place:

> [Socialism and nationalism] are political *ersatz* religions. ...What way of escape do they [his fellow Jews] have? The way of liberalism? Who would not be ashamed of its superficial and false cheapness? The way of nationalism? Self-deceit and self-destruction! One becomes a Hebrew nationalist in order to not have to be a Jew any longer! The way of orthodoxy? There is no retreat from life into fossilization, even if it be the holiest fossilization. The way to Christ?...There is no way out!

For such Jews, coming to terms with their ethnicity and the ever-shifting place it afforded them in German society often meant rejecting religious tradition as well as Christian society; Nietzsche's atheist, humanist dedication to the arts and the improvement of culture was the third path.

Most, Golomb says, moved on to other causes and ideologies after consuming Nietzsche in their youth; only those who remained unallied to any particular identity continued to remain dedicated to his writing. This same phenomenon continues among college intellectuals of all ethnicities today; a fling with Nietzsche might be their most common denominator. But Jews of the time were already dealing with crushing anti-Semitism, and their turn towards Nietzsche was therefore far more necessary and passionate than that of any lonely undergrad. Many, Golomb says, "describe their first encounter with Nietzsche's writings as a revelation: an "emotional shock", a "shaking" experience which they endured "breathlessly or as an "invasion." Jakob Wasserman lauded Nietzsche as "one who "stressed again and again" that "without the devotion and infallible enthusiasm of the modern Jew, art would have been but sorrily understood and received in the last fifty years,"

and refers to him as one of the few "to whom *Antisemiterei*, as he called it, was a horror and an abomination; nay, more – an indignity."

The relationship with Nietzsche held by Jews who were, as Golomb says, passing through the "twilight of the idols," both supported them in their move towards atheism and perhaps helped to generate that move. Nietzsche also helped to inspire a sense of the Jewish humanist mission in Europe, one of "the transfiguration of values" that would improve European culture at large, which in turn helped to generate the Jewish Renaissance. All of these elements—Nietzsche's commitment to opposing anti-Semitism, his positive vision of modern Jews, and his philosophy of self-actualization and *amor fati*—gave German Jews the psychological tools to move closer to acceptance, peace, and joy... before, that is, those efforts were horribly shattered by fascism.

Zionists also found great strength in Nietzsche, although he hoped instead for Jewish assimilation into Europe. According to Mendes-Flohr, his diagnoses of the "spiritual maladies of bourgeois civilization appealed to many Zionists, for it offered them insights into what they regarded as being the spiritual corruption and desiccation attendant in two thousand years of exile, in which Israel was denied the normal conditions of healthy, life-affirming existence in tune with the creative forces of the people." This is not the *first* example that comes to mind of Nietzsche being used to affirm nationalist and traditionalist politics, but it is an instructive one. Martin Buber, Nietzsche's foremost apostle among the Zionists, speaks on what Nietzsche gave to the Jewish Renaissance: "...a vital feeling of all that is strong and beautiful... it is of utmost importance for us that our people regain this vital perception and feeling. For only full human beings can be full Jews, who are capable of and worthy of achieving for themselves a homeland." For him, Nietzsche was virtually a prophet. Mendes-Flohr: "In his own writings, Buber did not tire of indicating that Nietzsche was the *Wegbereiter*—the forerunner—who by creating "new life values and a new feel for existence (*Weltgefühl*) forged the most promising path for the Jewish renaissance."

Today, questions around nationalism, self-determination, autonomous organizing, and the disruption and restablishment of hierarchies of power arise again and again among people fighting oppression. What is called for now is something like the sort of dialectical tension Nietzsche saw as necessary to his project of solidarity with Jews while maintaining a critique of religion—but let us hope our failure this time, whatever form it takes, is less critical than his. Nietzsche's failure demonstrates that we must hold several

points in balance: an appreciation and respect for the historical experiences of oppressed groups along raced, gendered, and classed lines; a commitment to underlining the socially constructed and entirely *unnatural* character of race and gender; and our own critiques. To my eyes, this was Nietzsche's key failure: instead of fighting for a more complex understanding, Nietzsche was seduced by his mystical relationship to ideas of cyclical history, thereby betraying his own most promising ideas.

Yovel, who bases this analysis on *Daybreak*, sums up Nietzsche's position:

> As a result of their hard and long schooling and invigorating experience, the Jews reached the modern era as the strongest and most stable people in Europe, and could have dominated it, though they did not wish to do so. However, once they decided to mingle with the other European nations, then because of their greater existential power they would naturally, without intending to, reach a dominant position, in the sense of determining the norms and the new values in Europe. If however the Jews continued their seclusion, Nietzsche grimly predicted they would "lose Europe" (that is, emigrate or be expelled) as their ancestors had left or been driven from Egypt. Nietzsche advocates the first alternative. The Jews must pour their gifts and power into a new Europe that will be free of the Christian heritage: *the forebearers of Christ must work today in the service of the modern anti-Christ (i.e., Nietzsche-Dionysus), and thereby pay their debt to Europe for what their priestly ancesters had done to it.*

Nietzsche's error here was one of noticing historical ironies, loving the twists and curves of fate. In following those logics, he fell victim to such a twist himself. Jews owed Europe nothing, but still paid for it. Had Nietzsche not pronounced that Jews must either surely dominate Europe or be driven from it, the Nazis would almost certainly still have attempted their project... but they would not have done so with a copy of Nietzsche's works in their hand. Friedrich Nietzsche helped to create the horror he sought to avoid.

> Is there any idea at all behind this bovine nationalism? What value can there be now, when everything points to wider and more common interests, in encouraging this boorish self-conceit? And this is a state of affairs in which spiritual dependency and disnationalization meet the eye and in which the value and meaning of contemporary culture lies in mutual blending and fertilization!
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*

> State is the name of the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly it tells lies too; and this lie crawls out of its mouth: "I, the state, am the people." That is a lie!.. ...every people speaks its tongue of good and evil...but the state tells lies in all the tongues of good and evil... ...Only where the state ends, there begins the human being who is not superfluous: there begins the song of necessity, the unique and inimitable tune.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathrusta*

Nietzsche saw nationalism as the ultimate formation of slave morality—the stupid, reactionary defense of identity that comes in rebellion against more liberatory, internationalist ideals —and had a clear critique of the state. This makes his legacy particularly promising for anarchists, who, these days, find sympathy on the Left for their opposition to capitalism, racism, sexism, and many other -isms... but are left in the cold when it comes to describing the fundamental complicity of the state with these forces. Although Nietzsche's counter-proposal—the governance of those who have reached spiritual heights through their practices over the masses who refuse to think for themselves—is hardly an anarchist one, his critique itself stands up well to an anarchist gaze.

Nietzsche saw even the openings created for oppressed people within state power as a source of their suffering, an critique that continues to feel both necessary and uncomfortable in light of the daily suffering of those *not* fully embraced by power. His assessment of the Jewish situation proceeds from that evaluation:

> The whole problem of the Jews exists only in nation-states, for here their energy and higher intelligence, their accumulated capital of spirit and will, gathered from generation to generation through a long

> schooling in suffering, must become so preponderant as to arouse mass envy and hatred. In almost all contemporary nations, therefore – in direct proportion to the degree to which they act up nationalistically – the literary obscenity is spreading of leading the Jews to slaughter as scapegoats of every conceivable public and internal misfortune. As soon as it is no longer a matter of preserving nations, but of producing the strongest possible European mixed race, the Jews are just as useful and desirable an ingredient as any other national remnant.

By Yovel's analysis, Nietzsche's beliefs went even farther than that—he found Jews to be the best candidates for becoming the *Ubermensch*, Nietzsche's own chosen people. This was based not in ethnic superiority, but in the superiority of their accumulated culture of trauma, oppression, and resistance and survival under and against those terms. His objection to ancient Judaism was for its creation of the "slave morality" that foregrounds Christianity, fundamental to the Western state of his time; Yovel wryly notes, "Whereas the anti-Semites accuse the Jews of having killed Jesus, Nietzsche accuses them of having begotten Jesus."

Among the wider Left, Bataille, Camus, Foucault, and Derrida all worked to defend and cleanse Nietzsche's name from its association with fascism, as well as to use his work for their own ends. In the interests of space, I will ignore most of these, and only examine Foucault's most open acknowledgment of his influence; then I will consider several of the egoist anarchists (who would, of course, have rejected any sort of implied affiliation with the Left.)

Nietzsche and Foucault

> ...knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting.
>
> —Michel Foucault

Michel Foucault sources his "genealogical" approach in Nietzsche's use of the term. In his essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", Foucault contrasts genealogy to the "pursuit of the origin," which is "an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities; because this search assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession. This search is directed to 'that which was already there,' the image of a primordial truth fully adequate to its nature, and it necessitates the removal of every mask to ultimately disclose an original identity." The genealogist, by contrast to

this essentialist approach, finds that "there is 'something altogether different' behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms." Rather, "[w]hat is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity." If it's turtles all the way down, they are at least very different turtles. By knowing forms as falsehoods, and rejecting them in favor of our impure, "derisive and ironic" beginnings, Nietzsche gave us the freedom to pursue greatness on our own terms. Foucault suggests we therefore pursue a "geneaology of values, morality, asceticism, and knowledge [that] will never confuse itself with a quest for their 'origins,' will never neglect as inaccessible the vicissitudes of history. On the contrary, it will cultivate the details and accidents that accompany every beginning; it will be scrupulously attentive to their petty malice; it will await their emergence, once unmasked, as the face of the other."

This is a revolutionary distinction—one of the many variant pieces in conversation that (de)compose anti-essentialist analysis and reasoning. Foucault has challenged the discourse and the academy as a whole by illustrating the basic failure in its approach, and turned to Nietzsche instead for a different tool. It is rather lovely to see these two men, themselves aficionados of the understanding of ancient Greece that is the backbone of the Western academy, together bite the hand that feeds them. However, they must be overthrown in their turn. Angela Mitropoulos has critiqued Foucault's understanding of genealogy as a deconstructive tool rather than a means of enforcing female subjugation and property rights, as well as his reinforcement of the false dichotomy between family and political life in ancient Greece; she, and many other feminist scholars, understand the family to function primarily as a site of labor and oppression.

While I support Mitropoulos' critique, I will continue to explore Foucault's use of the term for a moment. He says that *Herkunft*, one of the three terms Nietzsche used that have been translated as "genealogy", is often understood as "a consideration of race or social type"; but this, he thinks, is wrong. He says instead that "the traits it attempts to identify are not the exclusive generic characteristics of an individual, a sentiment, or an idea, which permit us to qualify them as "Greek" or "English"; rather, it seeks the subtle, singular, and subindividual marks that might possibly intersect in them to form a network that is difficult to unravel." While still unfortunately biological in tone, from my perspective, Foucault contrasts this sharply to the Nazi understanding of Nietzsche's use of the term: "...the Germans imagined that they had finally

accounted for their complexity by saying they possessed a double soul; they were fooled by a simple computation, or rather, they were simply trying to master the racial disorder from which they had formed themselves." In contrast, "[g]eneaology does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people." Furthermore, though disassociated from race and ethnicity—which are in fact social contructs rather than biological inheritances—"[g]eneaology, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body." As an intervention into an academy that had erased bodies except for the purposes of experimentation, subjugation, and (privately) libidinal excitation, this suggestion of a study of the impact of history on bodies is central to understanding Foucault's project at large, and the project of many who are related, however metaphorically, horizontally, or rhizomatically, to him.

Foucault founds this entire analysis of resisting essentialism when doing history and opposing those who enforce it within Nietzsche; he cites all of Nietzsche's major works in this essay. He quotes, for example, *The Gay Science*: "I can't stand these lustful eunuchs of history, all the seductions of an ascetic ideal; I can't stand these blanched tombs producing life or those tired and indifferent beings who dress up in the part of wisdom and adopt an objective point of view." Foucault sees these sorts of objections not as a simple anti-intellectualist aside, but as a profound critique of the way the academy has done violence to its consumers, participants, and those subjected to its gaze. This interpretation might be Nietzsche's best chance of redemption—if, that is, he were interested in any such Christian notion.

Saidiya Hartman describes prohibitions on speaking about slave ancestry in Salaga, Ghana:

> It was said that tracing genealogy destroyed a state. Those who defied the law risked the punishment of death. Everyone who had ever mentioned the law to me had explained that it was intended to protect those of slave origin. In practice it prevented the enslaved from speaking of a life before servitude and it abolished their ancestry. The slave existed in the world, but without either a history or an inheritance.

Tracing geneaology destroyed a state—speaking of difference and oppression in your background, describing a life before servitude, is a dangerous and radical act. All of our tools are double-edged; we should not discard this one because it may cut us, but use it wisely in pursuit of liberation.

> Indeed, with the help of a religion which has humoured and flattered the sublimest desires of the herding-animal, things have reached such a point that we always find a more visible expression of this morality even in political and social arrangements: the DEMOCRATIC movement is the inheritance of the Christian movement. That its TEMPO, however, is much too slow and sleepy for the more impatient ones, for those who are sick and distracted by the herding-instinct, is indicated by the increasingly furious howling, and always less disguised teeth-gnashing of the anarchist dogs, who are now roving through the highways of European culture.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

> For us — fascism — is a poisonous mushroom planted quite well in the rotten heart of society, that is enough for us.
>
> —Renzo Novatore, "Towards the Creative Nothing"

Max Stirner was an almost-contemporary of Nietzsche's, writing just before him; a member of the Young Hegelians, he is, famously, one of Marx and Engels' opponents ('Saint Max') in *The German Ideology*, and argued against Proudhon. He is often called the father of individualist anarchism, though his work has also been a source of inspiration for American Randian libertarians, and is considered important to existentialism. While Nietzsche never directly mentioned him in his writing, there is widespread speculation that Nietzsche was greatly inspired by Stirner's work *The Ego and His Own*; many of their ideas are deeply similar.[g]

While many fascists, including Mussolini, read and admired Stirner in the period before they articulated themselves as fascists, Stirner has been used within fascist rhetoric far less than Nietzsche. Therefore I introduce Stirner here as a way to more clearly examine what is at the basis of elitist theory, without the taint of straightforward fascist or statist adoption: the belief that the individual (or they and their closest companions) have a self-defined right (the only kind of right, in this framework) to govern themselves completely, with no regard for the will of others. I will briefly explore Stirner's framework with the help of the American anarchist and social ecologist John Clark.

g "[Stirner's] *Unmensch* might be seen to be in some ways a prototype for the *Ubermensch* of [Nietzsche]." (Clark 14) The Wikipedia page "Relationship Between Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Stirner" is a clearinghouse of speculation on the subject more generally.

Stirner believed that everyone is an egoist—there are only self-aware or unaware egoists. "Purely altruist" actions are merely those performed by people unaware of their own self-benefiting motivation in performing altruistic acts. The ego, which Stirner called "the creative nothing", is a self- and other-creating force, an almost-solipsism, with great potential for action in the world if it knows itself to be ultimately powerful. He attacked the role of the state and the hurch in dominating individuals by clouding their self-knowledge of their wills with laws, customs, and morality. Rather than rewriting the terms of the social contract, he called instead for a war of "all against all", which Clark evaluates as a sort of unfettered capitalist logic, a "ruthless will to power .... power over things, persons, and above all, oneself"—something like the ethical basis of U.S. Randian libertarianism. (Rather horribly for his anti-capitalist adherents, Stirner was the German translator for Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*.)

This, as Clark correctly points out, ignores the social nature of the development of the ego; none of us exist in a vacuum, and there is little reason to think of an individual body as such rather than as an organ of a larger social body. Were one's hand to become self-conscious, it might well attempt to make war on one's foot in the search for supremacy, but there would likely be little advantage to the body as a whole; it might even bleed to death in the process. Stirner betrays a lack of ecological understanding.

The ethics of any situation cannot be traditionally evaluated within Stirner's framework, as all ethics are either evolved from one's own ego—what one finds pleasing, what advances one's will—or are the imposition of the wills of others. There is no real altruism; it is only an indirect way of giving oneself pleasure or advantage, perhaps clouded by ethical imperatives cast from outside the ego. For Stirner, as for Nietzsche, the thing to attack is the dream of collectivity, of the social contract, of the rules of engagement that have been transmitted to us all by culture. Then unfettered, the ego is free (in the negative sense: free from bondage) to pursue positive freedom—its own enjoyment.

We can see these arguments within Nietzsche's work: "One speaks of 'equal rights' …. as long as one has not gained the superiority one wants." This may be true in the arena of social democracy, but I do not believe it is strictly true of all human interaction. Brinker:

> ...Nietzsche continually stressed that it was the political implications of the idea of equality, as found in democracy and socialism, that he

found catastrophic. To his mind these abominable 'modern ideas' like all feelings of 'neighborly love' or social and class solidarity were nothing but remote echoes of slave morality.

However, this interpretation of human behavior is an underpinning of Nietzsche's common utility to fascists and Leftists, Golomb observes: "...there is little question that for Nietzsche, a hierarchy of value distinguishes between individuals .... the otherwise contradictory fascist and socialist readings of Nietzsche disclose a notable likeness on this one point; in common they depict a superior human being of the future." This is also Stirner's hope, but he is even more essentialist about it: whereas within Nietzsche an individual could always strive to overcome themselves, Stirner "suggests that people are born poets, musicians, philosophers, or incompetents, and that their abilities or lack thereof will be manifested regardless of environmental influences." As for what we ought to do with those abilities, rather than the communist "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs," Stirner calls for something more like *from each according to their power, to each according to their competency to appropriate it.*

This philosophy is well enough for those who are born into or achieve aristocratic heights of power; but what about the rest of us? Are those people who do not achieve remarkable self-actualization doomed to be ruled by others—and will that rule be necessarily superior because of the superior people conducting it? (Nietzsche "began to favor political and militaristic restraints to discipline the herd.") What is to ensure that superior people will take control—isn't it as likely that they will refuse political power, seeing it as a burden or trap? Stirner evades these questions by only envisioning the future lives of the liberated ego, which he imagines as a "union of egos," a chosen "unfreeness" of those using each other to work towards accumulating as much as possible. This is not an attractive prospect to me; nor is it one, Clark points out, that is likely to be most advantageous for any individual egoist, who could do better exploiting the sheeple within a traditional state. Stirner does not worry much about the governed, though perhaps he believes everyone will join the free association of egos; he suggests vaguely that inequality will disappear in a liberated society. Considering all this, I feel that his philosophy is perhaps most useful as a sort of self-help effort towards personal liberation... though I suspect it will always appeal best to the resentful among us, those who feel themselves to be pearls cast before swine.[h] It speaks to a sort of basic insecurity, a belief that one cannot trust in

h Jesus, whom Nietzsche saw as exemplary, advised us to not cast our pearls before swine in his Sermon on the Mount.

the kindness of others, and that such impulses towards kindness in oneself are necessarily suspect.[i]

However, there is a certain anti-essentialist current within Stirner that I must celebrate: the idea that we must question, and therefore undermine, the *naturalness* of all of our basic beliefs about ourselves and each other. This was lacking in much early anarchist thought; people were often unintentionally reformist in their practice or theory, i.e. seeking the equality of women while not questioning what women *are*. Unfortunately, Stirner did not apply his own ideas nearly far enough. Most horribly, he periodizes human history with the use of a racial metaphor:

> The history of the world, whose shaping properly belongs altogether to the Caucasian race, seems till now to have run through two Caucasian ages, in the first of which we had to work out and work off our innate negroidity; this was followed in the second by *Mongoloidity* (Chineseness), which must likewise be terribly made an end of. *Negroidity* represents *antiquity*, the time of dependence on *things*...; Mongoloidity the time of dependence on thoughts, the *Christian* time.

As Foucault said, those who seek conflict with a biopolitically governed society but do not have an analysis of biopolitics are destined to be racist. Stirner's faulty analysis, Clark observes, makes this sort of thing inevitable: "A view of anarchism which seeks to eliminate coercion and the state, but overlooks the other ways in which people dominate people, is a very incomplete and quite contradictory type of anarchism." Stirner still argues for a return to nature: no longer as a sheep, but now as a predator. Centralizing one's own desires, when those very desires are shaped by a coercive society, is no more a solution than is any other strategy.

Sadly, I must depart from Clark when he argues "...the social anarchist will find that the egoist reproduces in everyday life what all anarchists condemn as evil in social institutions." He is not wrong; but social anarchists are no less guilty of the same. Our practice does not follow our theory; when it comes to those whom I have theoretical disagreements with, sometimes that seems to be for the best.

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i Clark talks through what he calls "one of the most pathetic passages" of *The Ego and His Own* on this subject, ostensibly on the problem of romantic love. Men's rights activists of the present day might sense a kinship with Stirner's sadness here.

Novatore and nihilism

Renzo Novatore was an Italian anarchist, poet, illegalist, and anti-fascist closely allied with the early Futurist movement, and remains one of the most well-known individualist anarchists today. He fought alongside the *Arditi del Popolo*, an anti-fascist militia I described at length in section 2; while part of an anarchist robbery gang, he was killed in an ambush by the police. Novatore drew great inspiration from Nietzsche, as well as from others influenced by Nietzsche; his most notable work is the poetic "Towards the Creative Nothing" (named for Stirner's conception of the ego) in which he advocated Nietzsche's condemnation of Christianity, democracy, and socialism. He often quotes Nietzsche directly, and uncritically relies upon his metaphors. Sadly, while he made many valuable contributions to advancing the anarchist terms of engagement, Novatore's work is also threaded through with essentialist fibers.

Novatore founds his rejection of society upon and through nihilism. "I am an individualist because I am an anarchist; and I am an anarchist because I am a nihilist. ...I call myself a nihilist because I know that nihilism means *negation*. Negation of every society, of every cult, or every rule and of every religion." But, he goes on, he rejects both "Nirvana"—the attainment of peace through the renunciation of care—and "Schopenhauer's desperate and powerless pessimism." "Mine," he says, "is an enthusiastic and dionysian pessimism, like a flame that sets my vital exuberance ablaze."

Nietzsche understood alienation to be a widespread social experience under capitalism and the nation-state, following Schopenhauer. While Nietzsche was not a member of the nihilist movement in Russia, he said in a March 1888 letter after the assassination of Czar Alexander II: "If I were in St. Petersburg, I would be a nihilist." Action for its own sake is a concerning commonality between right and left nihilism; but the nihilist rejection of the world as it is, without the need for an immediate construction of some "better world," is an important turn away from the sort of utopianism that has justified so many terrible acts. There is nothing quite like the despair one feels after the revolution "comes" and yet does not come, the many failed orgasms of history. Ohana tells us, "The character of the nihilism of 1917 was quite different from that of the nihilism of the 1860s. The Russian nihilists of the nineteenth century preferred science to faith, materialism to idealism... realism to romanticism. After the revolution, however, manifestations of mechanization, robotization, primitivism, vagabondism and suicide became very common." It is the nihilist whom Nietzsche saw as the true *Ubermensch*

for their liberation from religion and the world as it is. Ohana continues: "In Nietzsche's view, man's alienation from himself caused a flight in two opposite directions: the rational and the religious are really only two sides of the same coin, the same alienation in a different guise. The historical or "weary" nihilism, as an inevitable stage in the development of Western culture, destroyed the decadent man and cleared the way for the rise of a man of a new variety: the Overman... a person who, first and foremost, cast his eyes on a world without redemption and without a God."

Joy in negation, of knowing oneself to be completely in charge of one's destiny—that is, to have control over how you choose to interact with your circumstances, rather than to withdraw from caring about them—has been Nietzsche's major contribution to anarchism. By Clark's conception in his work around Stirner, it is a "positive freedom" *towards*; I see it as also a "negative freedom" *from*. Müller-Lauter terms it an "*active nihilism*" that would destroy anything that would invoke the authorities. For those at war with society, the Church, the state and capitalism—the primary enemies of early anarchists and fellow travelers—this metaphor served as a alternative source of emotional and mythological strength in the face of certain defeat. It has also formed a useful challenge to the strains of anarchism that have focused on establishing new utopias or on renegotiating the social contract; it has broken the paralysis and/or potential domination that can come from an intensive focus on community consensus, and challenged the premise that humanity can "return" to an idyllic state of nature, or that such a state of nature ever existed. As such, individualism has served as an important pole in the dialectical, interpenetrating anarchist engagement.

Novatore's passionate critique of democracy as a levelling force in human society—a new form of oppression—is based deeply in Nietzsche, who was "hostile to democratic rule but also to the state." It has found resonance with those dissatisfied with the half-measures offered within our current forms of civic democracy, more or less socialist. Novatore: "With democratic civilization, Christ has triumphed. ...If the triumph has not yet been completed, socialism will complete it." Presciently, he describes socialism as no more than the reconsolidation of power, a "dangerous and impractical bridge between the tyrant and the slave." This continues to be the anarchist critique... though the term "slave" is, happily, retired from casual usage these days. Clark gives Stirner respect for his recognition of the dangers of socialism: "Apologists for democracy and liberalism in particular have always held that even if one's will is not carried out, the mere fact that one has a part in the decision-making process is a guarantee of freedom. It is to Stirner's

credit that he saw through this fallacy, and apprehended that all exercise of sovereign power consists of either actual or potential tyranny." Law is violence, either actualized or promised, for Stirner, Novatore, and anarchists as a whole.

As we saw with Stirner, egoism can fundamentally challenge essentialism because it asks one to question the basis of all one's beliefs, customs, and practices, thus underlining their constructedness. The wisdom of egoists—ideally—is received neither from God nor from society, but from their own experiences and thoughts. However, this is not an entirely happy story. Possibly the most controversial statement in Novatore's essay is his condemnation of a primary anarchist virtue: "I don't want and I don't grant solidarity, because I am convinced that it is a new chain, and because I believe with Ibsen that the one who is most alone is the strongest one." In this, he stands *with* Nietzsche, but *against* most anarchists. Most anarchists would also disagree with Novatore's elevation of strength itself. In glorifying some above others, and asserting it is for reasons beyond personal preference, Novatore—as Nietzsche before him—contradicts the equally long-standing anarchist pursuit of equality.

The links in Novatore's mind between the strong, self-actualized individual; an essential division between those who have freed themselves and those who have not; and the categories to which he assumes these belong is given its most disgusting evidence in this aside: "Woman: the most brutal of enslaved beasts. The greatest victim shuffling on earth. And, after man, the most responsible for her problems. I'd be curious to know what goes through her mind when I kiss her." While I find misogyny and racism to be somewhat optional variants of essentialist manifestation—sometimes you get just one, or the other, or odder versions of either—their presence is always clearly indicative of a deeper issue. (I was distressed to find that the anarchist Biófilo Panclasta—similarly, an illegalist individualist who was deeply inspired by Nietzsche—says things just as misogynist in "Trina Jiménez", republished in *Seven Years Buried Alive*.) However, in a different essay Novatore writes under a female pen name, and demands a life free from the social expectation of marriage, children, and domestic labor; (s)he calls for the right to sexual pleasure and personal liberation for women. We all contradict ourselves, sometimes for the better.

Novatore also tends towards glorifying violence for its own sake. I find the decontextualized celebration of violence to be a problematic current for those engaged in liberatory struggle—too similar to the fascist celebration of violence as an elevating and purifying experience—although a certain

celebration of warfare is perhaps necessary to any conflictual mythology. Novatore affirms, "There is no rest for my rebel spirit except in war, just as there is no greater happiness for my vagabond, negating mind than the uninhibited affirmation of my capacity to life and to rejoice." And he engaged in actual armed conflict with the fascists around him, rather than simply glorifying violence in a vacuum. He understood fascism as a manifestation of *ressentiment*: "Fascism is nothing but the convulsive and cruel pang of a plebeian society, emasculated and vulgar, that agonizes tragically drowned in the quagmire of its flaws and of its own lies." Further, he condemns it as just another way to organize the masses, unblessed by the freedom of the elite individual: " ...Fascism is impotent because it is brute force. It is matter without spirit; it is night without dawn. Fascism is the other face of socialism. Both of them are bodies without minds."

Nietzsche and the fascists

> Without myth, every culture loses the healthy power of its creativity: only a horizon defined by myth completes and unifies a whole cultural movement.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*

> What attracts them is the sight of the zeal that surrounds a cause—as it were, the sight of the burning fuse, and not the cause itself.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

> Apart from the fact that Nietzsche was not a socialist, not a nationalist, and opposed to racial thinking, he could have been a leading National Socialist thinker.
>
> —Ernst Krieck, a leading National Socialist thinker

> I am terrified by the thought of the sort of people who may one day invoke my authority.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche, letter to Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche

Nietzsche provided an important mythology, as well as philosophical legitimacy, for the National Socialists who took him up after his death. Ohana describes the "*anti-rationalist* rebellion that led to contempt for [Leftist] intellectuals... since these [fascist] intellectuals did not consider reason a justification for politics, they replaced it with myth."[j] While Nietzsche sought to undermine

j Ohana has an agenda here. He published a trilogy called *The Nihilist-Totalitarian Syndrome* in which he argues that the two are intimately linked, and seems to suggest a return

traditional values, morality, and social hierarchies—which appealed to those futurists and technophiles among the proto-Nazis—he also borrowed and built upon the idea of eternal return, which spoke to their beliefs around the past superiority of "their people" and the inevitability of their rise. Moreover, the new myths to which Nietzsche contributed—the Jewish Enlightenment, the coming *Ubermensch*, aesthetics as a replacement for religion—grew fear in the hearts of proto-Nazis, inspiring what Nietzsche would call their "slave-revolt"; unwilling to participate in the social revolution afoot, they turned to reaction. It was a self-feeding cycle.

Nietzsche has long been useful as a source or justification for what Günter Berghaus terms "war mythology"; even before fascism broke out, 150,000 copies of *Thus Spake Zarathrusta* were distributed to German soldiers during World War 1. For many, especially those approaching fascist warfare from the Left, Nietzsche was best taken in combination with Georges Sorel. Sorel saw war as "a fundamental motive of human action, whilst pacifism was regarded as a form of cowardice"; as Nietzsche framed it, life is struggle. And, while Sorel's model of revolution was a general strike, he believed the masses needed leaders, exemplary figures that would set the pace. Especially in Italy, during a time varying between mediocre Socialist government and intense Leftist uprisings that fell short of revolution, this became an appealing suggestion. Mussolini, a fan of both writers, used their mythology intentionally. He appropriated Nietzsche's directive to "live dangerously" and spread it throughout among the young fascist movement—an outcome, we can be assured, Nietzsche would have repudiated.

Marinetti, the prominent Italian Futurist and sometimes fascist, said: "Nietzsche was for us everything. He represented liberation from moralism and mediocrity, the capacity for renewal and rescue from entanglements, for doubting everything that had been accumulated up to now: all this was connected with the name Nietzsche." D'Annunzio, the Italian warrior-poet whom I have discussed at length in section 2, brought Nietzsche's work into Italy. He served not only as a conduit, but also as a filter, one that simplified and popularized Nietzsche's ideas, particularly his concept of the *Ubermensch*. In a strike against one of the fundamental myths of the Left, D'Annunzio was even able to use Nietzsche's ideas to attack "the political principles of the French Revolution... for eliminating natural differences between human beings." Both Marinetti and D'Annunzio served as cultural tillers who, while they had ambiguous and contentious relationships to Mussolini, prepared the ground for his fascist ideas to grow. Sorel and Nietzsche proved the correct fertilizers to achieved the questionably desirable result of elitist revolt.

to traditional morality and republican values of citizenship as an alleviative.

Sznajder says of D'Annunzio's adaptations of Nietzsche's thought: "The 'overman' was still needed, perhaps more than ever, not as a lone hero of superior morality but rather as a leader of the enrolled masses, trying to instill them with his own values, which were symbolically entangled with those of the nation or empire." This is how Nietzsche, hero of the ungovernable individual, became Nietzsche, justification for totalitarian fascism. Mussolini wrote in 1932: "Against individualism, the Fascist conception is for the State... which is the conscience and universal will of man in his historical existence... [and which] interprets, develops and gives strength to the whole life of the people..." While this contradicted everything Nietzsche said against the state and nationalism, and for the primacy of the individual, Mussolini deliberately extrapolated from Nietzsche's work in this way. He said reading Nietzsche "cured" him of his Marxism, much to the detriment of us all; his mistress/biographer recalls that, as he began to form the *fasci*, "it is then that on his lips begins to appear frequently and insistently the word 'aristocracy'." No mystery whence he derived *that* term. Mussolini glorified ancient Rome, and believed with Nietzsche that the "slave revolt" of Christianity had destroyed it; he saw the rise of fascism in Italy as the eternally-predicated return of this highest form of civilization... though this did not stop him from cynically collaborating with the Church as he consolidated his power later.

On the German side of things, Berel Lang cites Nazi philosopher Alfred Bäumler's openly described "deliberate effort required to force the interpretation of Nietzsche through this very transposition from the will to power in the individual to the authority of power on behalf of the state." Unlike Mussolini, Hitler never bothered to read Nietzsche; but others were completing this alchemical trick for his benefit. Lang rightly raises the question of whether fascists actually relied upon Nietzsche's ideas—or whether they simply invoked his aura to legitimize *their* ideas. To my eye, their use of his concept of will to power was inevitable, given his rhetoric of the new aristocracy—given the political contingencies of the time, those striving for social power were always going to determine that *they* were this so-called aristocracy, and use this status to legitimize their claim to power. And, while Nietzsche was against the *state* per se, he was for the governance of the weak by the strong—so is it really such a leap? After all, Nietzsche says, "a good and healthy aristocracy... accepts with a good conscience the sacrifice of untold human beings who, *for its sake*, must be reduced and lowered to incomplete human beings, to slaves, to instruments... ...Egoism belongs to the nature of a noble soul—I mean that unshakable faith that to a being such as 'we are' other beings must be subordinate by nature and have to sacrifice themselves."

Golomb argues that it is all a mistake, that Nietzsche has been misinterpreted when it comes to will to power: most fundamentally, that the Nazis mixed up Nietzsche's *Macht* (will to power) with *Kraft* (physical strength/force) and *Gewalt* (violence). He says,

> Nietzsche identifies the use and exploitation of others with violence (*Gewalt*), contrasting this external manifestation of gross force with power that is directed toward an internal expression of overcoming. Internalized power must also be free of masochistic violence, since it seeks not the elimination of individual drives but rather their creative sublimation... Although the qualitative power of the individual or society is no guarantee of its material success and victory, it nonetheless ensures a spiritual and cultural superiority. For this reason Nietzsche is careful to distinguish between the history of power (spiritual and intellectual progress) and the history of force (physical and material domination). It is precisely those who have been in the weaker position relative to the history of force who are responsible for cultural advances relative to power: it is the more unfettered, uncertain, and morally weaker individuals upon whom *spiritual progress* depends.

Golomb also describes Nietzsche's concepts of negative and positive power, assigning Nazis firmly to the pole of negative power. He concludes:

> Nietzsche draws an ideal picture of an entire culture driven by powerful individuals—generous, independent, unprejudiced, endowed with the ability to perform a creative sublimination of instincts. Such persons have "the ability to accept contradictions", possess dynamic vitality and self-control, are devoid of bad conscience, have adopted the attitude of *amor fati*, and exhibit self-acceptance. These are the genuinely "free spirits" with the attitude of "*la gaya scienza*," people who embody intellectual tolerance and existential integrity. They are noble and courageous, rejecting the desire for expansion or domination as ultimate goals in themselves. This picture could not be more opposed to that of the Nazi Aryan "Reich," which sought to suppress such positive power patterns and deliberately wiped out so many of its living models.

I must say, it is difficult to imagine that even the Nazis wanted to suppress all positive power patterns, to create a grey totalitarian society of perfect conformity—but perhaps Golomb is right, and it was all a misunderstanding of terms. However, all of the above examples have only to do with

distinguishing Nietzsche's concept of will to power from how it was used materially by fascist forces—Nietzsche's basic premise, that there are morally superior *individuals* and spiritually weak *masses*, continues to be upheld; those qualities are just assigned to different characteristics or peoples depending on one's political preferences. Nietzsche had no interest in consensus, in whole horizontal communities of people figuring out their needs together: that is, the anarcho-communist proposal. He wanted to identify the enlightened, strong, superior, and kind (although he seems to have had a good deal of admiration for cruelty, as well), and make them our new philosopher-kings. This is the elitist proposal in its raw form, unflavored by either an anarchist rejection of authority or fascist goals of totalitarianism.

Unfortunately, while evil, weak, and stupid people in power have done a great deal of harm, replacing them while maintaining the hierarchical power structure in which they previously resided has seldom done the trick. Furthermore, this idea appeals intimately to the very men of *ressentiment* of whom Nietzsche is most critical: they cannot help but believe that they are the superior ones, those destined to be *Ubermensch*, by the same logic employed by a parent who tells their child that the bullies must simply be jealous.

I will give the last word on this subject to Yovel:

> Finally, Nietzsche attracted abusers because of what I call his political impotence—the vacuum he left in political theory. I know this is not the common view today, but I think Nietzsche's protests against politics are borne out by a marked lacuna in his thinking—the lack of a positive philosophy of the "multitude". Politics is not about the happy few, but about those ordinary people, the modern mass or "herd" which Nietzsche did not care about and did not make the topic of any positive philosophical reflection. This invites abuse, because when ordinary people are supposed to act in *extra*ordinary ("Dionysian") ways, or when a patrician message intended for a minority is generalized—that is, vulgarized—into a mass political movement, the result is not only intellectually grotesque but a political profanation and possible catastrophe, quite opposed to Nietzsche's aspirations, yet an outcome he should have seen.

> I am writing for a race of men who do not yet exist, for the rulers of the earth.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche

> *Aryan influence* has corrupted all the world.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche

I cannot see how any philosophy or political platform premised on a race of rulers could go well for the majority of humanity. It seemed promising in Germany because the past and present alternatives had proved so frustrating; as Germans tried to organize themselves into a nation, the difficulty of organizing the masses led to an identification with the elite on the right. Ohana:

> In their contempt for mass-culture, Jünger and Heidegger [writers very influential to the Nazis] were influenced by Nietzsche's analysis of the moral dialectic of the master and slave. Mass-culture... ...was identified with the bourgeois world which aimed at comfort, mediocrity, and security. ...Jünger and Heidegger believed that the technological era could reach fulfillment only under the leadership of an elite which would reject the shallow optimism of the masses. Both of them awaited the Nietzschean Overman who would complete the nihilistic process.

The same evaluation could be made of pre-fascist Italy—between the struggles of *risorgimento* and Leftist failure, governance by the Overman seemed far more appealing. But, as those examples show us, the process of trying to prove yourself as the elite necessarily means the identification and persecution of an Other. Furthermore, this is an utterly dark prospect for most people—who would actually like to be governed by even the wisest few? (Perhaps many would like that, actually, but to sleep at night I have to believe that is a socially constructed desire that might be better resolved in bed than in the halls of government.) And what process ensures the rise of the so-called cream to the top? Nothing in history serves to assure us that this rise is inevitable, or even really possible. At least the anarchist version of elitism is an elitism of the individual, a refusal to sign the social contract for oneself, rather than an attempt to gather power over others. Sadly, as we saw earlier, many anarchists have failed to rebel against every part of society.

Furthermore, I think we ought to stop relying on the mythology of ancient Greece and Rome, by which I mean the ideas of the gods as essential

forces; the great philosophers of that time and place; and the mythology of marketplace democracy that whitewashes its foundation in colonization, misogyny, and slavery. None of these forces are useful to any of us, except perhaps those of us who would like to be on top. If Nietzsche was able to so clearly see how the mythic structures of Christianity underlie our society, why did he choose to name his ideal forms and forces after another set of gods? As for the democracy Nietzsche hated, from when and where did he think it theoretically derived? European-Americans were not inspired by the Iroquois when they founded the United States, except in the most backhanded way. Like imperialists before them, U.S. settlers were more likely to kill those they colonized than to learn from them.

Ohana describes nihilism so: "Denying history the right to guide politics means revitalizing the present moment through a philosophy of dynamism and a politics of violence; this leads to the rejection of history, contempt for culture-preserving intellectuals, and the desire to destroy universities, museums, and libraries." This is an unfair conflation of nihilism with Futurism, really—that last line is directly out of "The Futurist Manifesto." But I must say that I feel a bit of what he characterizes as the nihilist urge to destroy history—that is, the Greek culture, myths, and idea of democracy that Nietzsche alternately relied upon and revised. Nietzsche was not alone in this project: dozens of revolutionaries on the Left have relied upon ancient Greece as "a paradigm for a regenerated future", as have the theorists of democracy and virtually the entire Western academy.

Ancient Greece was no worse than anywhere, probably, but so much of Western civilization has been theorized from the history/mythology that people have compiled and revised about it that it is increasingly difficult to view it with fresh eyes; it has too many layers of congealed blood clinging to it. I would like that project to end. European and Mediterranean mythic structures cannot possibly reflect our (and let us always trouble this "our") experiences as a globalized world, though I do not propose we simply try instead for pan-cultural representation. I have personally benefited from the slowly-increasing diversity in the universities and libraries, but it is not alone what I call for—rather, I think we should stop whitewashing and elevating *any* particular moment of the dominant culture's past, especially those predicated on what "we" have repudiated.

However, Nietzsche's philosophy was anti-essentialist in many moments. He argued that we must overcome our alienation from civilization, to overcome ourselves, to deliberately create ourselves as art: "The search for authenticity

is the wish to express one's *indeterminancy* [emphasis mine] by the spontaneous choice of one of many possible ways of life. The individual is akin to the artist who freely shapes his self as a work of art. *To become what we are is not to live according to our so-called "innate nature", but rather to create ourselves freely.*" This version of Nietzsche emphasizes the individual's ability to create their own fate, challenging notions of historical destiny. As such, it was and is useful for those who are coded by society as worthless.

He also championed an aesthetic approach to life, "attacking naturalism as the dominant artistic tendency of his time." By thus valorizing artificial construction, he underlines the human possibility of self-definition, rather than essentialist or materialist reduction. Simon explains that "A 'love with perceiving eyes' (*Zarathrusta*) would be a love that really 'perceives' another human being, recognizes in *another* a human being, even when it is unable to understand this other person from its own point of view. It no longer wishes to reduce this person to its own concepts, to notions about this person that it cannot "understand" from its own perspective. '*Comprendre c'est egaler*'—this does the other person an injustice." Nietzsche acknowledges the difference that makes solidarity possible. Simon:

> ...Nietzsche speaks of 'good and bad days.' 'It is difficult to be understood. One should be deeply grateful merely for a good will towards the *subtlety* of an interpretation.' 'On good days' one can 'grant one's friends a great deal of leeway for misunderstandings.' This leeway is for the viewpoints of the *others*: for a way of understanding that simply cannot be understood from one's own vantage point. One demands on such days to have absolutely no more 'interpretations'; one understands 'without having to mediate with an interpretation,' i.e., 'aesthetically.' By contrast, 'resentment' holds sway on bad days. Everything has 'its' time.
>
> Nietzsche calls understanding without a 'mediating' interpretation, without a 'translation' into one's own language, 'the latest' and 'scarcely possible' form of inner experience."' That this is scarcely possible means that it is currently possible only 'on good days'—not at all times and not whenever one wishes. 'Good' and 'bad' are terms still used to describe the various conditions that one and the same person is in. The rift runs thorough one's own identity. It is only on 'bad days' that one searches for the certitude found in one's 'self'-'identity', hoping to drive away this internal opposition. One searches for safety in a worldly knowledge gained thorough one's 'participation' in a 'divine', 'undivided' view of everything. Nietzsche's own evaluation of Judaism vacillates depending on his own condition.

This is a good explanation of both the drive towards essentialism and the attitude necessary to oppose it. It tells us that we ought to view Nietzsche and his relationship to essentialism dialectically—that is, we should treat him *inessentially*. Each era of his major works represents a nearly total reversal of his previous views; while they can be examined together dialectically, a marriage of his ideas that purports to demonstrate their contradiction and call for divorce would be disingenuous. He had good days; he had bad days. And, after all, Nietzsche has yet to be fully recuperated, and that is promising. Ohana despairingly remarks:

> If Nietzsche had limited himself to religious criticism such as that of Kierkegaard, of economic analysis such as that of Marx, or psychological exposure such as that of Freud, his philosophy would have been a specific critique of the world, and would have dialectically served part of reality after having been internalized by people. But Nietzsche's thought was so radical in its critiques that it embraced every aspect of reality; it involved an absolute refusal to accept any consolation for the human condition...

Nietzsche believed that traditional morality, dictated by those with economic, political and social power, was flipped by the Judeo-Christian tradition in its exaltation of the wretched. This he termed a slave-rebellion; much of his work is dedicated to criticizing the attitude of resentment foundational to this new morality, and exploring what he conceived of as "master morality." The idea of siding with or emulating the masters rather than the slaves in any given situation sickens me. I believe his metaphor is no sad accident, but fundamentally indicative of Nietzsche's actual faults—as well as making his work conducive to adoption by fascists and other racists. I would like to counterpose the sad dichotomy he established, the predicament in which he left/established for the Jews, with Marie Yellow Horse Brave Heart's work on historical trauma.

Yellow Horse Brave Heart worked within Lakota communities as a social worker, clinical researcher, and Lakota tribe member. She developed her theories around historical trauma within that context, and found similarities with Lakota experiences and those of the descendants of Holocaust survivors. She identifies the following features of historical trauma response:

> a) transposition... ...where one lives simultaneously in the past and the present with the ancestral suffering as the main organizing principle in

> one's life, b) identification with the dead... ...so that one feels psychically (emotionally and psychologically) dead and feels unworthy of living, and c) maintaining loyalty to and identification with the suffering of deceased ancestors, re-enacting affliction within one's own life... ...Additionally, there is survivor guilt, an ensuing fixation to trauma, reparatory fantasies, and attempts to undo the tragedy of the past.

Those who suffer from historical trauma are much more likely to experience heart disease, alcoholism, depression, suicide, and a host of other physical ailments. To my eyes, this seems to be related to, but independent from, the material conditions associated with displacement... nor is it a strictly epigenetic phenomenon, a trendy analysis I find problematic; it is a social, cultural, and family horror. Yellow Horse Brave Heart attributes this suffering to a lack of grief facilitation—"[a different study] asserted that the Lakota suffer from impaired grief, a consequence of massive cumulative trauma throughout history."

She shares many samples of personal testimony from study participants who report horrifying experiences in their own lives. I will repeat one general reflection:

> We look at ourselves and our nation and we look at where we were traumatized... Our development is arrested and we are stuck. [The trauma] continues to be perpetrated. I mean that it happens over and over again in lots of different ways... individually, personally, emotionally, and to us as a group, so we just continue to be victimized... I think that is why a lot of our people have become apathetic and cold because this thing is so overwhelming and hopefully someone will look at all the layers of the [trauma] that we have to deal with... it's overwhelming to me at times.

Would Nietzsche, I wonder, consider these Lakota survivors bearers of "slave morality"? Would he accuse them for their own plight? Would he valorize the most "exceptional" of these survivors, those who were able to succeed on the terms of the dominant, oppressive society that occupies their land, murdered their ancestors, tortured their parents, and afflicts them so deeply today? Perhaps he would only consider those survivors who become abusers in their own right to be men and women of *ressentiment*; I have often thought that word fit abuser mentality well. But, leaving the injustice of victim-blaming aside, none of these exercises in assigning blame amidst the survivors are *useful* to their healing, nor to the accountability of those who persecuted them.

Yellow Horse Brave Heart's work to find sources of generational healing for Lakota people is not only practically useful in the short term for aiding people in their recovery, but offers a different framing for understanding how cultures and peoples are shaped by the long-term impacts of suffering. It assigns blame squarely on the individuals, societies, and cultures who began the harm, without discounting the personal responsibility held by those who have acted it out against their loved ones. The techniques of survival the Lakota she worked with have developed include loyalty, service to others, hard work, and generosity—and these techniques are not devalued because they came from surviving trauma.

While everyone is responsible for refusing to harm others, no matter their own background and experiences; while discovering and expanding one's own will to power at no expense to others may be quite profitable in the pursuit of self-actualization; while renouncing religion, democracy, and the world's other attempts to ensnare one into contracts to which you do not wish to consent is a valuable exercise—I find Nietzsche's separation of the world into masters and slaves unacceptable. I am interested in pursuing the kinds of healing Yellow Horse Brave Heart and the Lakota she worked with have elaborated; the sorts of justice being worked out in Rwandan communities after devastating mass murder; and the solidarity necessary for the survival of all of us, including those of us without an ancestral home or the desire for one. If I must live in the world Nietzsche imagined, I call for a revolt towards freedom: one without definitions, hierarchies, or borders.

II. Populism: "..a tragicomedy of illusions and failures."

Populists are often—though not always—fighting for democratic principles; their methods simply do not resemble those of pluralist democracy. Populists see themselves as saving the people from their oppressors, rather than engaging in the low-intensity constant conflict of pluralism that often amounts to simply maintaining the status quo. Successful populist movements frequently move down a totalitarian path that tends to erase their popular roots. For the nation to perfectly reflect the desires and needs of its citizens, the citizens must be molded to fit the image of the nation—achieving this perfect correspondence requires change at both ends. In many situations, this creates the elite—the *Ubermensch*, the Fascist Man, the martyred heroes, or the vanguard—who "best" embody the political and social values of the movement, thus betraying the populist values that gave birth to it; and, in its turn, this justifies the suppression of dissent and diversity.

Still, the calmest solution is not necessarily the best. While most modern democracies see pluralism as their primary objective, this does little to eliminate the resentments and desires that foster both elitism and populism. Pluralism provides stability and is less prone to troubling excesses... but promotes indifference and alienation where populism can stifle dissent and minority rights. On an experiential level, populist movements offer a sense of meaningful engagement for their participants... but that participation requires enthusiasm, the search for power, and the confidence to use that power, all of which come and go intangibly and tend to reproduce the elite when present. Despite these problems, in times of crisis even citizens of pluralistic democracies often generate populist movements in an attempt to save or liberate themselves.

I found Kirk Hawkins' book *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective* a compelling starting point for this discussion. Hawkins argues that populism is a worldview created by economic and social pressures, that it reproduces itself in a mutual relationship with its own rhetoric, and that it finds its outlet just as easily on the Left as the Right. Hawkins asserts that both causal beliefs (how the world *does* operates) and normative beliefs (how the world *should* operate) are important to populism. However, populism is not a set of principles, but "a deeper aspect of culture that expresses basic, interrelated beliefs about history, that nature of the self, and the metaphysical. It is a worldview and is expressed as a discourse. "That worldview is fundamentally Manichaean: it affirms and reinscribes the historical struggle between Good (Rousseau's will of the people) and Evil (the conspiring minority) via its

analysis of the "recent" subversion of the political system. This worldview is an entirely different beast than pluralistic discourse, which pragmatically encourages a balance of perspectives and the virtues of an institutionalized democratic order; for populists, even those who hold democracy as a value, the institutional order is too corrupt to function and must be overthrown or dramatically reformed before democracy or equality could function. From this perspective, pluralism is at best a hindrance and at worst a mire; the swamp must be drained.

The equation necessary for a large-scale populist movement to form, Hawkins says, is as follows: a clearly discernible evil (the abuses of those in power); that directly affects the people (daily survival is difficult and/or repression is intense); and a charismatic leader behind which opposition can gather. Whereas pluralistic democracies function by maintaining things as they are, providing just enough options for the majority of people to keep their discontent from rising to a boil, populism speaks instead to that very discontent. This is its advantage, when conditions are correct. Hawkins sees populism as primarily defined by its discourse, rather than its specific ideological platform, material/historical positioning, or structure. This explains its big-tent tendency, its ability to welcome all those with whom it shares a common enemy; the *content* of any particular populist struggle is less relevant than its *condition*, and its structure evolves necessarily from its worldview. "Worldview" is our understanding of how the universe works and who the real actors in it are; "discourse", the expression of worldview, subconsciously expresses fundamental assumptions, and/or, according to postmodernists, shapes and constitutes them. However, the two act to mutually reproduce each other; discourse leads to the development of worldview as surely as worldview generates discourse. Worldview and discourse shape beliefs, but are less elaborated and practically specific than ideology. In example: Chavismo, Hawkins says, is an ideology, born of a populist discourse, which flows from a Marxist national liberation worldview.

People are prone to adopting Manichaean worldviews during times of crisis. Manichaean thinking is moralizing and dualistic: we are in the final crisis; no fence-sitting is permitted; the past weighs heavily upon the present; the injustices upon and strengths of the people are eternal truths continually enacted. "Good" is equivalent to the will of the people; this discourse therefore tends to flatten dissent, or regard it with suspicion, because there must be only one people with a united will for this moral framework to function. Thus, the Manichean outlook is anti-pluralistic and repressive because it tends to seek equality through sameness, or the suppression of

difference. Ironically, it is therefore prone to takeovers by minority groups who feel they represent or presume they know the will of the people. ("The people" is a term deployed internationally in populist discourse; within a white U.S. context, it might be "the Heartland"—"the place in the common imagination embodying the positive aspects of everyday life.") Populism does not play within the political rules of its society or act with respect for its opponents; science is also often seen as not-authoritative by populists. And, finally, Manichean worldview calls for or expects an apocalyptic revolutionary rupture, though conservative populists are often unwilling to use such terms because of their association with Marxism, and leftist populists are sometimes troubled by its religious parallels.

Charismatic linkage between populist leaders and the rest of the movement is not necessary to populist movements, but is very common within it; it is an important facilitator of power. The relationship is an exceptional one, in which people support a leader primarily because of their perceived extraordinary skill and personality. Leaders call for radical change, and often seem quasi-divine to their followers; this combination generates popular support for them without any necessary direct exchange or clear benefit to the supporters. If the leader makes promises, they continue to matter to the supporters as an expression of the leader's character even if they are not fulfilled. Popular movements that fail to manifest such a leader may fail and wilt away; by Hawkins' assessment, "[w]e are surrounded by constant examples of ephemeral populist movements that fail to leave any lasting imprint and may never really get off the ground" for lack of such charismatic leaders. While members of Leftist populist movements may feel uncomfortable with how this dynamic defies their ideals of horizontal power, it is addictive.

Hawkins tells us that "Political worldviews and discourses such as populism represent a different level of ideas than an ideology; they are mostly empty boxes that can hold different types of programmatic content." When ideology takes over, populism itself can be evacuated from the political tendency it originally generated, as it was in Nazi Germany. The Volkische discourse that began by centering the common people of the countryside, by posing the simple German peasant life in contrast to "Semitic" industrialization and decadent modernity, transformed into the image of the *Ubermensch* backed by tanks and factories in his struggle against international imperialist forces. While there were always elitist strands within Volkische ideology, it was its adoption of a charismatic dictator and shift into Nazi governance that caused both the exemplification of the elite German man and a positive emphasis on modernity left these influences of popular German Romanticism largely

in the dust. The eventual mechanization of the Nazi state might well have been a nightmare for the earliest progenitors of their ideology, though that does not cleanse their hands of it.

When all is (relatively) well, populists have little to do; one observer finds that "in a situation in which most of the population is still integrated into the existing social order, the political possibilities of a displaced and mobilized elite group will be limited. The only realistic possibility to originate a large mass movement would be to induce the disintegration of the existing social order and cause the release of large sectors."[k] However, capitalism reliably produces precarity and crisis; moments of peace are seldom prolonged or widely shared. Carl Boggs observes that "movements typically flourish where there are mounting crises of legitimacy, where the old systems of social and authority relations are challenged by broad cultural ferment or social upheaval." Within these moments of crisis, in which the old solutions no longer seem to offer solutions for the needs of the people, there is opportunity—but it is easily fumbled. To be successful by any measure, social movements must overcome unfavorable balances of sociopolitical conditions, create broad social alliances, and have coherent and responsive strategies for action to survive beyond the immediate moment of tension. Within pluralistic democracies, they must resist not only direct repression, which inflicts fear upon the entire movement by targeting its extremities, but also the buying out of their leaders and the institutionalization of their conflict, its recuperation. To be successful in their goals, social movements must instead cause the conflict to spill out of the bourgeois political sphere, to resist the attempts of the government to contain rebellion by drawing the conflict back into the state's own political arena, whilst surviving attacks meant to terrify it, to make its daily environment inhospitable.[l]

Sometimes, this is successful for moments, and those successes continue to echo beyond their own recuperation; despite the state's containment mechanisms, social conditions in the 1960s led to the development of broad-based movements in Europe and the Americas that were directly rooted in the crisis of capitalism, and continue to operate today both inside and outside

k He notes that this was the situation for the Montenero guerillas in 1970s Argentina, following their betrayal by Perón. (Germani 30)

l One can think of the repression faced by the Black Panthers, which took the forms of murder, imprisonment, COINTELPRO, and the deliberate introduction of drugs by the government... but also the institutionalization of their free breakfast program, the rehabilitation and claiming of intellectuals associated with the Panthers, and the channeling black radicalism into "safer" routes. All parts of this formula were important for destroying the Party, which was already-always contending with the inhospitable context of daily survival under white supremacy.

of "acceptable bounds." Boggs argued that those movements were "unlikely to disappear due to the persistent and increasing social decay endemic to late capitalism…. The capitalist crises have produced similar "populist movements on both the right and the left." And, indeed, precarity produces anxiety, fear, and resentment, emotions perhaps more easily channeled by the forces of reaction or revolution than by progressives. The early Italian fascists were often described simply as "*spostati*"—displaced people.

Respecting the pluralism of compromise is seldom a sticking point for those in the majority unless it is economically beneficial to them, even when their politics are supposedly founded in such tolerance. One could cynically track the correspondence of the success of almost any civil rights movement to the economic benefit its approval brings to those in power. Despite this, we are used to supporting the underdog story of those fighting for their civil rights against such power. Is the Left still the party of the oppressed once it has gained institutional power, or is it inevitably corrupted by that power? Anarchists argue that even (or especially) the Leftist state cannot possibly be trusted. The Russian example showcases this point.

The Narodniks

The Narodniks could be most dismissively described as a bunch of disillusioned rich kids in 19th century Russia who felt guilty about the suffering of the peasants for their benefit. Members of the radical intelligentsia, their thinking was heavily influenced by the West, but pointedly Slavophile, with an exaltation of the land and the simple people. They followed their politics by going "back to the land" to reach out to and support the peasants... but were disillusioned by what they found there. While peasants did live a form of communism, as the Narodniks imagined, their primary struggle was for simple existence; more disappointingly, many of them harbored interests in getting ahead on a personal level, rather than exalting the commune the way their admirers did. *Narodnichestvo*, then, persisted as a romantic populism, but necessarily as an impersonal one that still saw the "people" (*Narod*) as an undifferentiated mass; the details proved too sticky. It is their failures that make this movement interesting for us. While the Narodniks existed simultaneously with the proto-fascist populism of the German Volkische ideologues, the internal and self-critical gaze of Narodniks tended to destroy ideology rather than affirm it, and the ideologues who remained were exposed, if unashamed, rather than affirmed by popular opinion. The history of this movement is useful for those who would like to critically interrogate their own movements for signs of ideology and relevance.

The social placement of the Narodniks is familiar from both the Volkische situation and the modern Left. Unlike the Chávistas, the Narodniks mainly came from the upper classes; in uplifting the peasantry, a people far removed from their own social class, the Narodniks were in fact fighting to abolish themselves. As the military governor of Moscow wrote about the earlier Decembrist Revolt, "I can understand the French bourgeois bringing about the Revolution to get rights, but how am I to comprehend the Russian nobleman making a revolution to lose them?" But, while the Decembrists pushed for a Westernization of Russia, many other Russian intellectuals had their eyes on a "specifically Russian future." In reaction to the Revolt, conservative Slavophile writers exalted the peasant commune as a specifically Russian construct—inspiring the Narodniks, the next generation of revolutionists. In a "dialectical twist"... this idea of the commune was appropriated by socialists.

A variety of other intellectuals engaged with and inflected the movement before the socialist takeover. Alexander Herzen, a Russian exile whose writing synthesized Western and Slavophile ideas, was quite influential. From afar, he called for "the servants of the people" to appear: "[The people] are waiting not for books but for apostles—men who combine faith, will, conviction, and energy; men who will never divorce themselves from them; men who do not necessarily spring from them, but who act within them and with them, with a dedicated and steady faith. The man who feels himself to be so near the people that he has been virtually freed by them from the atmosphere of artificial civilization; the man who has achieved the unity and intensity of which we are speaking—he will be able to speak to the people and must do so." The apostles Herzen evokes here feel very similar to the *Bund* of Germany, an elite group dedicated to the soul of their land—but their directionality, importantly, is different. Herzen commands such a man to speak to the people, whereas the attention of the Volk ideologues was directed outward. Both groups treated the people as a sort of bath that washes one clean of modernity, but the Narodniks actually *spoke* to the bath. Their resulting disillusionment from this recognition of difference sent them on a divergent path.

One of the first apostles to respond to Herzen's call was a priest's son, Nicolas Chernyshevsky.[m] He was a "unflinchingly radical" fanatic who opposed talk of love and even democratic government on the grounds of its irrelevance to the people. He also refused to romanticize the people, praising one writer who depicted peasants unfavorably: "Only a few clear-

m A character somewhat reminiscent of Nikolai Levin in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina.*

sighted persons like Uspensky who love the people fiercely could muster the resolution to lay before us these traits without mitigation." Despite his refusal of idealization, he wanted to build a communist society that bypassed the fresh evils of Western capitalist transition (enclosure, the expropriation of the peasant and their reduction to bare life, industrialization) by virtue of its basis in the peasant commune. As an essentially Slavic institution, the commune would keep Russia ethnically/culturally pure while allowing for modernization towards a completely communist society. On the subject of ethnic purity, there is a tension here worth considering in the fact that Russia's long history of anti-Semitic pogroms *continued* under state Communism... a political philosophy portrayed by anti-Semites in other places and times as a quintessentially *Jewish* form of politics. As for the Narodniks, some refused to condemn the pogroms of the 1880s, adopting a stance of "realism" in their absolute support of the peasantry as the revolutionary subject... no matter how ugly.

The Narodnik Nicolas Mikhailovsky, however, spoke out against the pogroms. He was foremost an individualist, arguing for the idea that a heterogenous society is a more advanced one from the perspective of any individual in it. The less specialized a society, the more developed a life any individual in it leads. He looked towards "the future socialist society in which men would live equal and unfragmented lives like the peasants, but would include within themselves all the areas of human experience that had been developed one-sidedly in fragmented societies." Another prominent intellectual, Peter Lavrov, believed that the people would make the revolution themselves, but must be guided by the intellectuals. "He was acutely aware that the intellectual's 'critical consciousness' often went along with anarchic individualism, egocentricity, and neurosis…" Another, Peter Tkachev, pointed out that the progress of the elite had only come at the cost of value extracted from the masses, and so their class status was ethically invalid. He felt that a proper balance of needs and resources in society must be achieved by reducing artificial, sophisticated needs—a fairly moralistic and totalitarian asceticism.

Lavrov agreed with Tkachev's critique, if not his proposed solution. Canovan writes: "...Lavrov pointed out that the precious development of civilization, which had made possible education and self-development for a privileged few, had been bought with the labor and suffering of all the rest, the mass of the people. The cultivated classes must therefore realize that they owed a vast moral debt to the people." And so they did, at least many of the young ones, and turned that realization into action on the advice of Bakunin: "In such a situation, what can be done by our intellectual proletariat, our honorable,

sincere Russian youth, devoted to socialism to the bitter end? They must, without a doubt, go to the people."

The biggest wave of them went in the summer of 1874, thousands of them, many just adolescents. They took up manual labor, became Orthodox Christian—anything to become one with the people, so they could speak with them about their revolutionary ideas. Unfortunately for their expectations, the people turned out to be largely disinterested or "wrong-minded" about the ideas the youth were preaching; the whole thing was a bit of a wash, and almost eight hundred of them were arrested. This experience convinced them that the Russian peasantry was not ready for immediate socialist revolution, but experiencing repression made them more committed than ever. In the face of this dilemma, the young radicals separated along two paths: some formed underground terrorist groups that made targeted strikes against the government, and some resolved to renew their dedication to the people, meeting them where they stood. The former had its high points of activity, and was certainly more attractive to the youth, but was disdained by many as elitist (and too reminscent of Nechaev, who had recently been tried for the murder of a fellow revolutionary.) The latter tendency was termed *narodnichestvo*, roughly translated as "populism." The intellectuals who pursued this path chose to consciously sacrifice their socialism in exchange for populism. These Narodniks began from a position of self-critique: the youth had gone to the peasants to teach when they should have gone to learn. Their project took many forms; one, Engel'gardt, started a school to train members of the intelligentsia to run ideal agrarian communes as a way to marry intellectual and manual labor... but most of the attendees gradually drifted away because they couldn't handle the work. Another, Stefanovich, rather outrageously took advantage of the peasantry's loyalty to the Tsar to start a peasants' insurrection against the nobles with a forged document that claimed the nobles had turned on the Tsar.

In 1876, some of the young populists started a party called *Zemlya i Volya* (Land and Liberty), calling for equal land distribution, freedom for subject peoples, and local self-government. They "went to the people" in a more organized way than before. However, these Narodniks felt rushed by their perception of how Western influence was slowly corrupting peasant life, destroying the very kind of communism that they hoped to generalize. (Ironically, this was largely a product of the emancipation of the serfs, who were beginning to demand more individual freedom and ability to own private property.) Under this press of time, the group experienced a personal version of the general problem: "Intellectually it remained committed to education and agitation

among the peasants and the growing industrial proletariat of the big cities; emotionally most of its members became obsessed with terror." In the midst of this debate, a nihilist named Vera Zasulich spurred the issue by shooting the governor of St. Petersburg, who had ordered another revolutionary flogged. Her act was widely praised; "direct action appeared to be vindicated." In 1879, *Zemlya i Volya* split in two: *Cherny Peredel* (Black Repartition) became the populist wing, and *Narodnaya Volya* (The People's Will) the elite direct action wing. In 1881, the latter assassinated Tsar Alexander II... but this did not assist their goal of a popular insurrection, instead strengthening the court reactionaries.

Many radicals became disillusioned with populism after this failure. They turned towards Marxism, away from the peasants and towards the (barely existent in Russia, due to its lack of industrialization) proletariat, including the leader of *Cherny Peredel*. He distrusted the "propaganda by the deed" element of the preceding movement, and came to believe that the peasantry would never constitute a revolutionary force. Instead, he saw industrial modernization's creation of the proletariat, Marx's revolutionary subject, as the only path towards communism. Some populists, on the other hand, objected to this Marxist historical determination as a form of collaboration with the enemies of the people. They did not wish to see peasants become proletarians, and believed the peasant commune was a more direct path towards a communist society. As Slavophiles, they were more invested in their own culture's movements towards communism than the specific trajectory advocated by outside Marxists.[n]

Although populist activity decreased at this point, their writing continued. A group called the Legal Populists wrote against modernization because of the terrible effects of development on rural populations, and Russia's inability to compete in the global market—an analysis similar to that of many Latin American populists now. Instead, they continued to call for the support of rural peasant culture by the rest of Russian society, and for the creation of a prosperous socialist society upon its basis. In 1902, spontaneous peasant revolts inspired a new wave of revolutionary populism, and the creation of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Still, the self-identified revolutionaries did not trust the peasants to properly divide up the land a mass uprising would liberate, and the peasants, existing still in a state of intense poverty, did not trust the revolutionaries to advise them. A huge gap remained between the peasants and their partisans.

n Many activists and revolutionaries have argued for a culturally specific adaptation of Marxism, or an outright rejection of its philosophies as irredeemably Eurocentric. See Russell Means' previously mentioned "For America to Live, Europe Must Die", Fanon, and others.

The Narodiks are an example of what Canovan terms the populism of the intelligentsia, as, she says, is Franz Fanon. Characteristics of the genre include looking back to the traditions of the past as well as forward to a developed society; a focus on the countryside rather than on towns, and a desire to avoid repeating mistakes of more advanced societies; an emphasis upon building a unique road to socialism through indigenous political traditions; and the idealization of "the people" while stressing the role of the intellectual elite. The people are glorified, but must also be improved... through the force of revolutionary violence, according to Fanon. There is a general tendency to attribute collectivity as a natural trait of the people, despite evidence to the contrary. The main problem is the relationship of the mass to the elites when the intelligentsia calling for such populism is part of that elite—"the relationship between the progressive minority and the reactionary populace."

None of the Narodniki efforts seemed to matter much, but what they wanted happened anyway... at first. In 1917, amidst general revolt, the peasants spontaneously rose, took back the land, and reinstituted the village commune, the *soviet*. In this, they vindicated the arguments the Narodniks had been making for decades—however, Lenin claimed this victory for the Bolsheviks by simply approving what the peasants had done. Canovan says, "Although the [populist] Socialist Revolutionaries were utterly defeated by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, it could be argued that the Revolution [of 1917] vindicated populism and refuted Marxism, and that Lenin succeeded largely because he was prepared to adopt a good deal of populist doctrine for purely Machiavellian purposes." Marxists came out on top because they were the organized minority. This victory rather vindicates the beliefs of *Narodnaya Volya*, though they did not win either—that it is, in fact, individual decisions and actions that make history, not huge social forces like the diffuse peasant-populist sentiment. Populists also had, perhaps, too many scruples about wielding power to win their power struggle with the vanguard Left. Their insistence on democracy and group decision-making proved their undoing, if also, retrospectively, a point for admiration. Canovan: "There can be no doubt... that Marxism-Leninism acts as a stiffening agent, providing a legitimation for overriding popular wishes that populism itself cannot provide." Lenin justified his tactical approach in the terms of the cultural war already in progress. Canovan again:

> [It] has been customary for Marxists to dismiss populism as the typically reactionary and self-deluding ideology of the peasantry, in contrast to the scientific and progressive viewpoint of the proletariat. According to Lenin, the populists' attachment to the peasant commune, their

hostility to Westernization, and their belief that expropriation of the peasantry could be avoided were all indicators that populism was a 'petite-bourgeois' ideology, the typical backward-looking view of small proprietors whom history was leaving behind.

Lenin ridiculed the Narodniks in particular for attempting to sidestep the "necessary stage" of capitalism en route to communism. Modernity and progress in the form of Leninist Communism had won the game; the populists—and the peasants—had lost. As the USSR began consolidating itself, it began silencing, imprisoning, or murdering those on the Left who opposed them. This utter betrayal of the Russian Left is most famously exemplified by the vicious suppression of the 1921 Kronstadt uprising, in which 2-4,000 workers (largely anarchists) in rebellion against the demands of the state were executed or imprisoned by Lenin's order.

However self-serving Lenin's justification of his co-optation was, his main point may have been factually correct: it is unlikely that the Narodniks could have really seen their dreams come to life. While Russian peasants did need land and liberty, and practiced the *soviet*, it does not seem that they were particularly interested in a broader socialism. Generally speaking, they remained deeply religious and did not believe in the emancipation of women. This made for a mismatch between the people and their self-appointed Narodnik advocates. Much like *Operaismo* or "workerism" today, *narodnichestvo* was an ideology of intellectuals oriented towards the peasants, rather than being a peasant-originated movement. Canovan describes one view of Russian populism "as a symptom of the neurotic alienation of the Russian intelligentsia"; as they were neither *in* the West nor *of* Russia once they had received their educations, the intelligentsia were acting to resolve this psychological conflict by pushing for a Russian synthesis of Western ideas. While this point rings true, their political efforts should not be reduced to a mere psychological complex. The Narodniks were able to critically examine their history, the forces of Westernization pushing in, and make a nuanced objection, even a counter-proposal. People in many exploited regions today do much the same.

A few other points of interest here: the divergence between them and the proto-fascist Volk, despite the land-based cultural essentialism both avowed, and the reasons for that divergence (a culture of self-critique rather than of self-importance, I think); their internal divide between pursuing "true" populism and trying to create a revolutionary situation by means of direct action, a divide visible in most radical circles at various points; the co-option of the movement by the organized minority; and the similarity of that time

and place to many regions today trying to resist a Westernizing, modernizing influence. The solidification of these revolutionary tendencies into totalitarian states is hardly desirable, but I am fascinated with the possibilities that exist just before that calcification. What different steps could've pushed the social rupture Russia was experiencing beyond the healing point, prevented its capture by statist Communism, and expanded it into a truly free society? How may revolutionaries escape becoming the Left?

Contrariwise, what causes disenfranchised people to move to the right instead of the left in their populist sentiment? What does it mean for radicals and revolutionists when the underdogs of society are socially conservative? Juan and Eva Perón's fascistic, popular rule in Argentina is our counterpoint.

The Peróns

> I am here among the working classes representing General Perón's wonderful heart; I am here to receive the concerns and the hopes of the working people and place them in the wonderful hands of General Perón, I am here to bring you the love that the General feels for you.
>
> —Eva Perón

Gino Germani describes the typical Latin American populist movement before the 1980s as a "vaguely radical but non-ideological organization led by disaffected members of the higher classes, often with a charismatic personality at their head, but based upon the urban masses, particularly those newly enfranchised or previously left out of politics." This was, he believes, a consequence of the conjunction of disaffected elites and disposable masses; while these movements enjoyed the support of the working class and/or peasantry, they did not result from the autonomous organizing power of either. Germani found these movements to be largely conservative; he argues that the lower classes are likely to choose populism over socialism "where rapid social change has produced a new proletariat who have not yet had time to acquire a distinctive working-class consciousness." This is why internal migrants, fresh off the farm, tend to be so prominent in populist movements. While Latin America as a whole has seen many different waves of populist movement on the Left and Right since Germani wrote, we can most easily explore his claims about Perónism and evaluate the defenses made by its partisans.

In 1914, 80% of the farmland in Argentina was owned by only 8% of the families who lived there. Additionally, only 40% of the farmers who

worked the land owned it, in contrast to 63% in the United States at that time. Tenant farming fostered economic disparity and class resentments; one historian compared it to the post- Civil War U.S. Southern economy. Early Argentinian history was also marked by a kind of "private-mindedness"; the early cattlemen who built wealth in the Argentine countryside did not want to pay for the country's infrastructure. This individualism was perhaps a factor in the failure of Leftist efforts in Argentina, as it was for Populists in the United States two decades earlier. Too, 30% of Argentinans at this time were immigrants, a huge percentage of the small country's otherwise largely *mestizo* population. The World Wars, from which Argentina abstained, served to weaken its economy. Everything was ripe for social conflict, and the oligarchy, afraid of the anarchists and socialists trying to bring that conflict, refused them any concessions. This set the stage for the Right to take power.

The military seized control of the country in a 1943 coup, convinced that Argentina needed an economic intervention, but unsure of how to perform it. Juan Perón came to power from that coup. Perón had been stationed in Italy in 1941, and observed Mussolini's political methods with admiration, learning the importance of mobilizing a mass following. He had himself appointed Minister of Labor and built friendly relationships with labor unions. When Perón was arrested in 1945 by the liberal opposition, a general strike and convergence of the *descamisados* ("shirtless") secured his freedom; he was then freely elected with 55% of the vote. He proclaimed himself the servant of the people, instituted a huge social security program, and, most importantly, married Eva Perón, still affectionately remembered in Argentina as "Evita." She was a working-class woman who raised herself socially by tactically deploying her beauty and charm; in her, the *descamisados* saw one of their own. When they successfully got Perón out of prison, a mutual emotional relationship between Eva and the *descamisados* was consummated—in marrying her, Perón married the land, as in some ancient myth. Like d'Annunzio in occupied Fiume, Perón regularly addressed the *descamisados* from a balcony, one of the kingly ritual exchanges of adulation that seems necessary to maintaining the myth of mutuality in popular fascism. And, like a fantastical queen become social worker, Eva Perón received endless delegations of workers through the Ministry of Labor and the poor through her own charity organization, and advocated for them.

She was enthroned in Argentine mythology. Navarro: "According to Evita, her daily contact with human misery during these audiences spurred her desire to assist all those who needed her help and intensified her commitment to them." Despite this beneficent imagery, Eva Perón was also a willing and

vital accomplice in her husband's dictatorship, providing the charismatic linkage he could not. Calling herself "the bridge of love" between Perón and the *descamisados*, her activism on their behalf and her image as one of them facilitated her intentional propagandizing for Perón and his regime. And, while her image as a nontraditionally powerful woman is deserved, she not only demonstrated that power in the most traditional way—working for her husband's success above all else—but actively organized other women to do the same. While a small number of women had begun organizing themselves from the Left—female "communist, socialist, and anarchist militants" participated in the Argentine political process in the 1920s and 30s—Evita subverted this politicization in the same way her husband did among the labor movement. She founded the *Partido Perónista Femenino*, and in her founding speech said that foundation of the party was "the strictest fidelity to the doctrine, the work and the personality of General Perón... For a woman to be a Perónist means above all loyalty to Perón and blind trust in Perón." While it seems odd that someone of such a conservative orientation would grant his wife such power (or at least not oppose her as she took it up for herself), in fact, Eva was the only person Juan Perón *could* trust. Because her power derived wholly through him, she could act as an extension of his power without causing him fear that she might turn on him. She was exceptionally good in her role, and her husband was greatly weakened by her 1952 death.

At odds with the Church that previously supported him over his moves towards secularization, and in the midst of economic troubles, Juan Perón was deposed in 1955. However, his popularity in the Argentine imagination lived on, and inspired action on both the left and the right; in a rather bizarre twist, he was brought back into power in 1973, although he died less than a year later. In one of his final acts, Perón put through a plan of governance designed to alleviate some of the concerns of workers; it stated in part: "This Act of Commitment is not a circumstantial price and salary agreement. It is the definition of an irreversible political action to increase worker participation in the national income within the framework of a new concept of worker compensation and relations among the social sectors—a starting point for the process of national reconstruction and liberation." Even at the end, Perón was attempting to continue the narrative of himself as the servant of the Argentine people, still through the lens of worker's advocacy.

While European immigration brought class consciousness to the Argentine proletariat, it was the Peróns who organized it, and they did so from the right. By Wynia's assessment, "Juan Perón adroitly exploited fear of working-class

radicalization, offering to take care of the nation's proletariat if others would give him the authority he needed to accomplish the task. ...the government would become the patron rather than the oppressor of a compliant working class that had discarded its revolutionary ambitions in exchange for a host of new economic and political privileges." This is reminiscent of the deal Mussolini made with the king of Italy upon his March on Rome, a deal which made Mussolini a minister—grant Mussolini power, the king seems to have thought, and gain a bulldog that would prevent the Left from seizing or overthrowing the government. The evidence of his mistake did not prevent the elite of Argentina from repeating it, though their consent was given after the fact, if at all. This phenomenon at large was termed "Bonapartism" by Marx; José Enrique Miguens, who seems to be a rather anti-Marxist historian, defines it so: "the 'bourgeoisie', threatened by the advancement of the 'proletariat' and feeling itself weak and incapable of managing the situation, decides to don a mask and give full power to anyone who defends it, with apparent concessions to the 'proletariat' as a means of appeasement." While his use of scare quotes indicates Miguens' disdain for these terms, it is a fairly accurate assessment of the phenomenon.

As for Perón in particular, his intervention came at the exact moment that labor unions turned away from fighting specific battles and towards a more radical opposition to capitalism itself—at the time they became truly dangerous. Wynia assesses Perón's successful co-optation of the labor movement as "one of the greatest robberies anyone had ever seen." While I do not wish to assign blame for their co-optation wholly upon the labor movement, it is interesting how much the economic interests of particular parties influences their willingness to elect and support dictators. Wynia bitingly observes of Perónist union leaders, "Theirs was the narrowest of visions but that was no embarassment to them, and the more ideologues on the left attacked them for selling out the proletariat, the more stubborn they became in defending themselves. Their success in denying Marxists and anarchists access to the working class has never been complete, but it is remarkable nevertheless and remains a source of great pride to regulars in the labor hierarchy."

Despite this betrayal by union leaders, which should come as no surpise to anyone who has observed labor for long, I think it is less accurate to say that Perón stole labor from the Left than to say that people who are fighting out of personal interest rather than political commitment may surprise those of any political orientation who cynically seek to organize them. Not only the *descamisados*, but the "lumpen" of any country, are not in waiting for education or organization from any saviors or dictators, though they may

sometimes choose them; the Peróns were the most powerful advocates for labor available at the time, though their net material impact seems to have been negligible. By Wynia's evaluation, "it was really a mock battle that he fought with the oligarchy. He had set out to prevent a class struggle rather than to advance one... What he took from the oligarchy was its government, not its property. It was good populist theater, not revolutionary politics, and ten years later, when Perón fled, the oligarchy was still there, bruised and vengeful, but not seriously damaged by Perónism."

Was Perón's fascist? Frederick Turner, who seems along with Miguens to be rather an apologist for Perón's regime, argues no—but his argument is quite revealing. Turner says,

> ...Perón *did* make too many decisions personally. Having surrounded himself with admirers, he did not benefit from the critical response of insiders that might have improved the quality of those decisions and therefore also their public acceptability in the long run. In this sense, but only in this sense, Perón was like Mussolini and Hitler, two other charismatic leaders to whom he is frequently likened. Perón was not in fact the "fascist" that his enemies have so long and so consistently claimed him to be.

Having made this rather specious caveat, Turner goes on to defend Perón not with evidence, aside from his lack of evident anti-Semitism and disinterest in making war, but primarily with a compelling (if disingenuous) argument that *all Leftists do as Perón did*:

> It was easy for the Marxist guerillas whom he allowed to fight for his return in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and then ruthlessly ousted from his movement once he regained control of the nation, to see Perón as a fascist traitor in the mold of Mussolini, one who would abandon the international socialism that he had professed to lead a nationalistic, self-service revolution. Yet, Marxist stereotypes aside, Perón was simply reverting to type, persecuting left-wing critics of his own national "revolution" in his third presidency as he had during his first two terms in office, having used some of his enemies to fight his battles and to gain himself office just as Marxist-Leninists had done earlier during the long course of the Bolshevik Revolution.

While this seems to me completely aside from the question of Perón's fascism—it is fallacious to say that because something shares characteristics

with its opposite it cannot be what it is—I find it a fascinating argument in light of the experience the Narodniks had with Lenin. One could reasonably argue that, when anyone takes power, regardless of their political orientation, they are likely to sell out the radical fringe of their base because of the pluralistic realities of governance. I would like to take a step further: *leaders of any kind cannot be trusted.* Aside from the question of power corrupting, no one person can possibly represent everyone's interests at once. Direct democracy, with its tangled and complex circles of power, seems actually more realistic a dream than trusting in representative democracy, let alone dictatorship, to fight for your interests. Perón did not serve labor, or the oligarchy, or the dreams of the Monteneros Turner speaks of here, although he treated with all of them at times. This realization came at a price: "The Monteneros, in their zeal to fashion an innovative kind of liberation, one that was supposed to join Perónist nationalism with their version of mass revolution, never accepted such realities of power and interest until they had been destroyed by their illusions." This destruction was literal: many of them were executed.

But, again, it is not clear that Perón or his movement were altogether fascist. One of Turner's opponents, Gino Germani, labels the Perónist movement as *fascistic* instead. He argues that, despite its fascist trappings, Perón's movement had a different constituency and historical function than fascism. "Fascist movements are fundamentally attempts by middle classes, who feel themselves threatened by working-class movements, to push their social inferiors back out of the political area. National populism of the type led by Perón is, on the contrary, a way of mobilizing the lower classes and bringing them into politics for the first time." Perón's actors were military, rather than middle-class; in his overview of the rise of European fascism, Germani finds that a middle- and upper-class coalition against the working class was at least as vital a structural factor as social displacement by class restructuring and/or collective traumatic events. Similiarly, Donald Trump's rise to popularity has benefited from the Great Recession of the mid 2000s, and the traumatic events of 9/11 and other terrorist attacks, but his is not a case of true Bonapartism, as Perón was not either. Much of the upper class seems more troubled by Trump than anything else; it remains to be seen whether they are willing to make an alliance with his supporters. With luck, this lack of a cross-class coalition will outweigh the advantage he holds as the current avatar of white supremacy in American politics... although he seems to have weighed this obstacle in choosing his Cabinet.
In any case, populism is but a tactic of fascism, not its defining characteristic, as it is not for liberatory struggles either. Germani acknowledges that Italian

and Nazi fascism were populist in their early days, but says this disappeared rapidly once they gained power, and that elitism came to the front of fascist movement instead. It is this elitist tendency that fosters a consciously cynical, Machiavellian attitude toward manipulation of the people, even if it is preceded by a genuine sense of unity with the people. Fascist or no, the popular demagogue turned dictator has been a problem since the time of Aristotle, who described it as a case of "the populace making a rod for their own backs." Germani offers us two possible analyses around how Perón and his like tend to rise to power:

1: "[P]opular support for dictators is a fundamentally rational strategy adopted by the people in situations where their interests are strongly opposed to those of the elite, and no other means of redressing their grievances is available." That is, bread and circuses make living under tyranny worthwhile. In this view, one framed cynically rather than hopefully by class war, only the strongest, most ambitious people will survive to become demagogues. It is often a rational choice on an individual level, if not a class level, to support a demagogue in return for patronage. So, a society can best avoid such leaders through the pluralistic strategy of being or seeming some degree of equal and democratic, rather than blatantly existing as a system that only serves the rich, or white, or men, or all three. However, even under these circumstances, demagogues are likely to occur in economic crises, which may be inevitable.

2: "[P]opular support for dictators is basically irrational and proceeds from the cravings for authority, status, and excitement characteristic of uprooted and frightened masses." This is the mass theory analysis, which has been more influential of late. According to this mode of understanding, when demagogues play upon the pre-existing fears and hatreds of masses, we can expect extreme authoritarian politics and witch-hunting. To avoid this, political power must in fact be kept away from the masses, but the *illusion* of participation must be given—pluralism becomes the cushion between elites and masses.

Each of these perspectives seem valid to me, though the latter implies a cynicism about human nature that I would rather direct at society. Which analysis one prefers likely speaks to whether one is more of a cloud-oriented neoliberal or an old guard elitist conservative. The question of how to *avoid* such popular dictators is more interesting to me. Alexis de Tocqueville, the famous French commentator upon early American politics, supported

pluralistic democratic politics as a way of preventing the evils of a democratic society. However, it has become obvious to everyone that official politics are no longer the primary driving force in society; it remains to be seen whether the spectacle and identity production apparatus of popular media will adequately fill the gap.

I am most intrigued by the possibility of realizing another of Tocqueville's fears: tyranny of the masses—or, more kindly, popular direct democracy. It has been realized in moments—such as during the Spanish Civil War, in which Spanish anarchists fought a popular struggle against the state, one more formal and successful than any attempted by anarchists since; and during the Paris Commune, birthplace (within dominant white Western culture) of the republican/libertarian ideals of "equality, liberty, fraternity." The Spanish anarchists had to turn their efforts towards fighting Franco and his fascists before they saw their dreams realized, and were eventually murdered and suppressed; the Communards were largely murdered or imprisoned after the barricades fell. Still, for the duration of their struggle, these people lived what seem to me to be lives of beautiful democracy, equality, and joy in difference, resisting the pull towards leadership or the enforcement of sameness. There are many examples of such lives, communities, and practices within other traditions, which deserve legitimacy, recognition—and privacy, illegibilty.

so many ways to fail

There are a few easily extractable lessons from the examples we have investigated. For one, populist movements are easily manipulated by those playing upon the economic interests and practical concerns that generated the movement in the first place; they are likely to install anyone who claims they will help them. For another, there is frequently dissonance between romantic Leftist ideals of the revolutionary subject and their actual personal or class interests, as illustrated by the difficulties experienced by the Narodniks in relating to the peasantry and by the willingness of the *descamisados* to elect Perón. While in Rousseau's time it was clear that the state was more brutal than the masses, the situation is muddier now, though we surely cannot trust to state power to protect us from each other. Witch-hunting and eugenics are just the easiest examples of the opposite situation—barbarity perpetrated by the elites against the masses, against which the state claims it will protect us. Still, populism is probably at its most useful when in conflict; it may be impossible to install populist government that does not generate a totalitarian environment.

When someone powerful invokes "the people", they are trying to start something terrible. When people are united by common cause or rhetoric, things tend to get ugly as differences manifest themselves, unless they are allowed for. This can begin within small cliques, but spread across classes as they react to real problems in terrible ways. Hannah Arendt reminds us: "Hitler's early party, almost exclusively composed of misfits, failures, and adventurers, indeed represented the 'armed bohemians' who were only the reverse side of bourgeois society." But, by the end, the masses were weaponized as well. "The temporary alliance between the elite and the mob rested largely upon this genuine delight with which the former watched the latter destroy respectability." It is in this way that fascism becomes an alliance of the mob and the elite against the bourgeoisie.

However, the lesson I am most interested by is a bit thornier; it is offered by Gino Germani. He says that mobilization on the right is *necessarily* preceded by radicalization from the Left, a phenomenon I had previously taken as simply a troublingly common coincidence. "The examples given above—Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile—best fit the mold of what I call "functional substitutes of fascism," insofar as while they all show significant differences with the classic ideal type, they have in common what is at least one of its basic aims, namely, *the forced demobilization of the recently mobilized working class*." [Emphasis mine.] That is, revolutionary mobilization that does not lead to actual revolution tends to open a vacuum often filled by reactionary counter-mobilization—which has the intention, or at least serves the purpose, of actually demobilizing the working class. This occurs even when its purposes are not transparently fascist: Germani notes that "[t]he countermobilization of the Argentine middle class against the primary mobilization of the lower class was believed to be, and in a certain sense really was, ideologically democratic. However... it also partly served antidemocratic, elitist interests." This is different in terms of intention, if not wholly different in terms of effect, to the kinds of countermobilization practiced by fascist totalitarian regimes. Of these, Germani says:

> The essential aim of a strictly controlled mobilization from above was to generate an active consensus in those groups whose demobilization had been violently imposed. That is, the aim was to transform the lower classes from a Marxist antinational, anticapitalist ideology to a nationalist one, with some kind of participation aimed at increasing productivity and obedience, with a rigid or militaristic hierarchical subordination to the upper clases and under the total control of the state. Certainly, in some cases fascism took authoritarian rather than totalitarian forms; that

> is, it was more concerned with the neutralization of the rebellious lower strata, trying to achieve their reconversion from citizen to subjects. This was the case in Spain, for instance...

By this analysis, it is the threat to society posed by anti-capitalist, anti-state, rebellious populations that causes a conservative response, one that moves beyond a pole within pluralism and becomes truly reactionary. In the U.S., "family values", men's right's activism and the persecution of abortion providers came in reaction to feminist struggle. Obama's presidency and the Affordable Health Care Act provoked the formation of a more intensely conservative congressional consensus than we have seen in some time. The Black Lives Matter movement, itself a response to the intolerable social conditions of white supremacy and the prison industrial complex, but specifically aroused by societal indifference towards the frequent police shootings of black people, has met with widespread backlash and a growth in explicit racism. As in 1920s-30s Spain, when people do not simply brood in discontent but take up active political agency for themselves, the forces of reaction must act with greater dehumanizing force to subdue them. From Trump's wall to his proposed Muslim registry, from violent attacks upon people of color in real life to Twitter rants about "cucks", reaction advances; we must fight at every turn to prevent its ultimate conclusion.

In using this analysis, we must be careful where we assign blame—the cycle of violence is a cycle that happens within an abuser, rather than between an abuser and their victim. To respond to injustice is not to deserve further injustice. No, the fault here for those in rebellion is only the fault of *not going far enough*, of issuing a challenge and then proving unable to live into it. We have previously explored the reasons for this failure, and they are not quite the fault of those in struggle either—they are structural, created by historic power relations, and virtually impossible to overcome. Still, just before each moment we have considered in which fascism or its relatives came into power, there was an opening: a breath of possibility, a time when fundamental change seemed possible. It is the reverberations of those possibilities that continue to inspire and transform us from afar.

III. problems of popular democracy: which people are the people?

> I tell you unless something is done to alleviate such things [voter intimidation and fraud] there will be more anarchists, aye, red-handed anarchists, in this country. I do not wonder that there are anarchists in this country; the wonder is that there are not more of them.
>
> —a Dallas laborer in the 1880s

The United States is, theoretically, a popular pluralistic democracy—something that seems close to common populist demands. Why is no one happy with it?

Direct democracy is the term now used to refer to self-government by the people in face-to-face assemblies. This used to be known simply as democracy; it was the U.S. attempt to extend this governing model to a much larger state via representative democracy, with checks and balances against the will of the people (as the Founding Fathers were not generally democratic in outlook) that confused the issue, creating non-directly democratic "democracy." Hence the tension, now and then—Americans expected popular sovereignty, but did not get it. Some U.S. states have adopted populist devices intended to re-popularize the government, such as referendums or recalls, but these are prone to manipulation by special interests. Town hall meetings in New England have a similar air of public participation in decision-making, but no formal decisions are made there, except on the smallest level. The Iroquois Confederacy, while it was governed by a council of representatives, may have more accurately reflected local consensus than American government does now. The only direct democracy afoot in the U.S. today is practiced by small groups without much power.

American political scientists tend to see direct popular self-government as impossible. They see the masses as ignorant, irrational, and authoritarian—so it is good that they are generally apathetic and do not participate. Democracy, they believe, is best managed by the elite; the masses must participate just enough to keep rulers from ignoring their interests. This attitude comes from an empiricist view of politics, the elitist placement of political scientists, and fearful liberals guarding against the possibility of lynch mobs. However, it ought to be noted that McCarthy was not a populist demagogue, but a consciously used tool, discarded only when he attacked the political establishment... and that black men are executed on Death Row more often than they are hung by mobs, these days. When the government lynches people, it does so with impunity.

Let us think through some pros and cons of popular direct democracy:

tyranny of the majority
A 'Herrenvolk democracy' is a society in which an increase in rights for the majority group have gone along with the decline in those rights for the minority group; e.g., the American South and apartheid-era South Africa.) This is, basically, when the majority votes to screw over the minority. This is used as an argument for the current U.S. government structure: the battling of interest groups prevents any from rising to the top. However, there is a populist assumption that one can distinguish between special interests and "ordinary citizens" that tends to obscure those with normative power: if the needs of a person with a disability are regarded as a special interest, able-bodied people's needs and desires will always be always preferred. The Founding Fathers, unsurprisingly, lacked a deep critique of oppressive power relations.

Sometimes "the people" have evil and wrong opinions. Canovan cites, for example, the popular support behind George Wallace and Enoch Powell, both cynically racist populists:

> "Populism" of this sort is an appeal to the people which deliberately opens up the embarrassing gap between "the people" and their supposedly democratic and representative elite by stressing popular values that conflict with those of the elite: typically, it involves a clash between reactionary, authoritarian, racist, or chauvinist views at the grass roots, and the progressive, liberal, tolerant cosmopolitanism characteristic of the elite.

This evokes the problem of the legitimacy of power in white supremacist societies based on popular sovereignty and respect for majority decisions. Elites see themselves as the vanguard of enlightenment, but they frequently face the ethical conflict of having anti-elitist politics, slowing them down. Populism, meanwhile, tends to glorify the folk wisdom of the common man; we can think of the Narodniks, going along to the pogrom in an attempt to be consistent with their politics.

Switzerland has been somewhat more successful as a pluralistic society that practices a form of direct democracy in several cantons by ensuring there is no concentration of any one group in a place, and having a cultural tendency toward amicable agreement rather than majority rule. Opposition is valued, and a space for dissent is made when compromises are not possible. Canovan

terms this *consociational democracy*: a democratic political system that manages to function harmoniously despite deep communal differences.

oversimplification/overdramatization of political issues

Opponents of popular democracy argue that we need technicians and experts to make complex decisions, and that no group of average people are qualified to make the kinds of political decisions necessary to run things on a large level. They also point out the tendency towards high emotion in populist politics. Both of these elements, they argue, would lead to a less competent government. Under our current, representative democracy, the ills of popular apathy and low voter turnout actually facilitate the process—candidates are elected and issues decided by self-selected competent, invested, and responsible voters, because everyone else stays home.

Canovan finds this thinking intrinsic to scientific culture. "The whole liberal-scientific-progressive package, in fact—in spite of its close historical links with movements for democratic reform—had an inescapably elitist and antipopulist slant. In the nature of things, if we are all progressing toward truth, some of us must be in front." We can see this in the politics of Silicon Valley, ranging from the guilty gentrification of San Francisco, to the proposal of distributing computers for all, to Tim Draper's proposal to break California into six parts so that the richest do not have to contend with the poor.

Rousseau dealt with this problem by rejecting progress and enlightenment in favor of populist values. He even defended the burning of the library of Alexandria. He denounced culture, set it in opposition to morality and freedom. Canovan summarizes his "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality":

> Painting a seductive picture of the "natural man," ignorant, solitary, completely uncivilized, but nevertheless equal, free and happy, Rousseau described the sad process of degeneration whereby, as a result of man's "perfectibility," he had been progressively entangled in society and enslaved by the more and more hierarchical system that civilization engendered... Man is best when he is closest to nature in societies that are simple, unrefined, and egalitarian. He is worst where he has progressed furthest along the road to civilization and inequality.

This suggests a Volkische fear of modernity and the elite. But even Rousseau did not actually trust the masses. In *The Social Contract*, he argues for popular sovereignty... but only under the watchful eye of a godlike lawgiver, guiding the blind multitude.

politican's populism

This is the kind of populism we are most accustomed to seeing in the U.S.: populist rhetoric deployed tactically by politicians to appeal to the people vs. the elites. This constitutes a political gesture against the existing parties. These politics are coalitional, 'antipolitical'; they claim that no real divisions exist among the people, at least not conflictual ones, so all divisions must be imposed by external, dark forces. This populist version of solidarity and unity is useful to politicians without being true—it asserts a trajectory of unity based on deliberate ignorance of real divisions... or, at its darkest, the extermination of those differences. When countries are under military threat, one party or leader may actually be able to nearly represent them, as in the moment of national unity the U.S. experienced after 9/11. It is common "... for a political leader to make use of populist rhetoric and, by playing upon the resonances of popular unity and distrust of faction, to ride to power on a fragile and temporary mood of popular harmony." This works well for political outsiders. President Carter used populist rhetoric and his outsider status to get elected; his outsiderness then worked against him once in office. Trump has been riding on the same current, as his his xenophobic base fears both immigrants and the establishment, and is facing the same setbacks; and, as his attempts to fulfill campaign promises falter, his base may rebel against electoral politics altogether. If their needs go unaddressed and their hatreds swell undiminished, they may turn towards more dangerous and radical means of achieving their goals.

At its best, this is a cynical tactic that appeals to emotions it never plans to realize. At its worst, of course, this tendency leads to fascism. The total loyalty of the Nazis was founded in alienation and atomization; they "derived [their] sense of having a place in the world only from belonging to a movement." While U.S. movements that have been successful enough to register in the national consciousness may not fit all of the criteria for full fascism, many have lacked only a compelling mythology that appeals to enough people, or a sufficiently charismatic leader. It is vital that we provide other, less terrible options for resolving the economic distress and personal alienation that sets people in search of new belonging.

Is democracy, in fact, actually desirable? A recent text from the anarchist publisher CrimethInc. argues otherwise: "Democracy," it points out, "is not the same as self-determination." The authors argue that, rather than trying to reform a process that seems to carry the above problems with it as inevitabilities, we ought to return to the values at their core: egalitarianism, inclusivity, and self-determination. Democracy, by asserting there are citizens

with legitimate decision-making power, presupposes the Other. Rousseau argued that slavery is not incompatible with democracy, and slavery's cousin *prison* seems to have been found compatible enough. CrimethInc. asserts, "This is the essence of government: decisions made in one space determine what can take place in all other spaces. The result is alienation—the friction between what is decided and what is lived." The anarchist proposal is to do away with the state, the hierarchies and power systems that generate it, and the artificial scarcity and mechanisms of fear that enforce it. While some anarchists feel that the concept of direct democracy is useful in this pursuit, the lessons of the last two decades of radical struggle suggest that it is insufficient. If, as I argue about Nietzsche, we should rely less upon ancient Greek worldviews, what does that mean about our models of governance?

popular desperation

It was never my intention to single out American conservatives in my analysis. I grew up in the Heartland, with right-wing neighbors as far as the eye could see, and I feel no particular sympathy with many aspects of liberal perspectives. I often feel annoyed at liberal scapegoating of Midwestern conservatives, of the town versus country attacks of "ignorant rednecks," and at the classism of "trailer trash." I hate the arguments that imply that if "they" were just as enlightened as "us," racism and similar evils would fade away. I find some down-to-earth conservative values appealing, even as I reject the authoritarian, nationalist and xenophobic implications of conservative ideology. I think that blaming conservatives' "backwardness" only serves to obscure the racist, colonialist, exploitative agenda that liberals enthusiastically support with their money and politics. In short, I wish to keep it complicated.

Still, I could not but recognize various similarities between conservative action and rhetoric of the explicitly racist past and the slightly masked efforts of today—and find them horrifying. Let us compare the examples of Prohibition and the War on Drugs. In both cases, there is a primarily U.S. citizen consumer base; the substances are illegal, but flow easily into the market. The illegality serves mainly to enrich the middlemen in the process, as well as the corrupt police and politicians who strategically overlook the trafficking. Some citizens demand the enforcement of the laws under the banners of family values, opposing social ills, and fighting corruption, so politicians play a careful game of appearing to be hard on crime while never taking action that might actually end the trafficking. Low-level dealers and users serve as the sacrificial lamb, while those who benefit from the trafficking mostly go untouched.

Eventually, of course, Prohibition was overturned; similarly, marijuana has been decriminalized or legalized in many states. In both cases, this occurred not because of compassion or enlightenment about the nature of addiction, racist enforcement, or the woes of poverty, despite the accompanying propaganda, but in fact because legalization was in the best economic interests of the state. On a larger scale, drugs continue to serve as a convenient means of controlling the flows of poor people: from the underground workforce of the streets, to the prison, and back again. The class war implications of addicting mostly poor people to a substance are obvious, whether or not you believe (as many do) that the U.S. government deliberately introduced crack into impoverished communities of color.

Even more importantly, perhaps, drugs are used as a reason for managing and policing the borders and the countries beyond them. Here is the most startlingly vivid parallel with Prohibition, in terms of class control through racism: the rhetoric around immigration in relation to the War on Drugs. In his review of the 1920s Klan, Leonard Moore quotes the *Richmond Evening Item* from 1922 as an example of Klan-esque thinking on the matter:

> The police have clues that are leading them straight to the dens of the worst outscourings of Europe… They have the best chance in ten years to rid the country of its most desperate and dangerous criminals. It will be the biggest service to this country since the "Red" raids two years ago… The great bulk of bootlegging is done by foreigners, so there should be no problem with the proposed law in Congress to kick out foreigners caught bootlegging. The foreign bootlegger is not just a criminal. He is an unpatriotic criminal because he is violating the Constitution. Putting him in jail is just a waste. Shipping him to his foreign land is wiser, more economical, and patriotic.

This is, of course, exactly how the modern American Right talks today about immigration. Nowadays there's much more reliance on the concept of the "illegal" immigrant, but I find it clarifying to see that the same xenophobic sentiment held when documentation was not framed as the central issue. Too, the immigrants being discussed here were mainly European—then not-white in a way that Mexicans and some people from South America are now not-white to the white American eye, something that has much less to do with skin color than with perceived differences in culture, language—otherness. The talk of "real America" (an essentially white, Protestant, rural or small-town image) is also identical. The threat is the same, that which must be protected is the same—the 1920s Klan were much more open about

their racism, but then, so was the entire white social climate. While there is certainly interrelatedness between organized white supremacy today and more legitimized organizations, I find this type of unintentional mirroring even more telling.

The Klan was able to nearly take over the Indiana Republican Party in 1924; nearly all Republicans elected that year ran with the Klan's support, and some were actual members. The modern GOP fears the power of the alt-right subculture so much that even former Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly, a survivor of its attacks, warns against it. The anti-establishment ethic of many conservative populists (which rings so hollow when one considers their avid support of patriarchy, racism, and other pillars of the establishment) may actually be a threat to certain people in power. Still, the rearrangement of a particular electoral party is very far from an attack on the actual establishment. Here is where populism loses its power, as any social movement that treats with government politics does.

The 1920s were a time of great social upheaval—industrialization, modernization, the automobile and the rise of youth culture, the Red Scare, one great war over and another to come. Social upheaval always provides an opening for the government and the people alike, a chance to deepen control or strike out against it. It is useless to speculate about what could have happened, what possibilities for human liberation went unexplored. It is clear, however, what did happen: power became more centralized in the hands of the rich; the rural working class, the farmer, was dispossessed of their lands and resources—turned further into the proletariat, with only their labor to offer; that independent economic opportunities were snuffed out, and factory work offered in its stead. When the Depression (an inevitable part of the cycle of capitalism) struck, the proletariat was reduced even further and forced to depend on welfare. FDR's programs may have saved lives, but they also created an entire new bureaucracy for managing life—a huge shift towards biopolitical governance. Almost a hundred years later, it's easy to see how much more dependent on government and big business we are as a result of these times. There's no going back now—globalization, the extension of factory-style specialization to a world-wide scale, makes it virtually impossible to rely only on your immediate community for survival. People at the time could sense that doom coming... and fought against it fiercely. The 1920s Klan, as horrifying and fundamentally damned by its racial politics as it was, was also a clear expression of that uncertainty, fear, and opposition.

Although people of color living through these times have generally recognized what was coming, white Americans have condemned them mainly in retrospect. When populist movements contain an element of xenophobic racism, we should immediately know them for a prelude to fascism. It is not only our ethical duty to oppose racism in its immediate particulars, but also important for our survival to recognize it—and the economic forces that precede and enforce it—as part and parcel of fascist tendency, whether it uses elitist or populist tactical forms.

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The Unquiet Dead

Anarchism, Fascism, and Mythology

8. Modern White Supremacy in the U.S. and Survival

...racism is rendered as the innocent daughter of Mother Nature, and one is left to deplore the Middle Passage or the Trail of Tears the way one deplores an earthquake, a tornado, or any other phenomenon that can be cast as being beyond the handiwork of men. But race is the child of racism, not the father. And the process of naming "the people" has never been a matter of geneaology and physiognomy so much as one of hierarchy. Difference in hue and hair is old. But the belief in the preeminence of hue and hair, the notion that these factors can correctly organize a society and that they signify deeper attributes, which are indelible—this is the new idea at the heart of these new people who have been brought up hopelessly, tragically, deceitfully, to believe that they are white.

—Ta-Nehisi Coates

...no matter what learned scientists may say, race is, politically speaking, not the beginning of humanity but its end, not the origin of peoples but their decay, not the natural birth of man but his unnatural death.

—Hannah Arendt

Incontestably, alas, most people are not, in action, worth very much; and yet, every human being is an unprecedented miracle. One tries to treat them as the miracles they are, while trying to protect oneself against the disasters they've become.

—James Baldwin

In this concluding section, I will think about modern white supremacy in the United States—primarily as it operates as a consciously-held political analysis and personal motivation by a fringe few, and less about how it functions as an institutional force throughout our government, economy, and daily life. (I wrote this section largely before the emergence of the alt-right; consider this background on the present situation, and look to others for current analysis.) Next, I will put the perspectives of Saidiya Hartman, James Baldwin, Frank Wilderson, Achille Mbembe, and Tah-Nehisi Coates on life under white supremacy in discussion. Finally, I will use the differences between these two narratives about white supremacy to showcase the alliance of analysis, mythology, and experience that inform our actions within this context.

Part I. Modern white supremacy in the U.S.[a]

> ...in the generality, white Americans are probably the sickest and certainly the most dangerous people, of any color, to be found in the world today.
>
> -James Baldwin

The United States is a structurally racist society. People of color in American society face persecution in every part of their lives. Racism affects (in differing and complex levels, depending upon the social perception of one's race) what opportunities any of us are given in school, what kinds of nutrition we have access to while growing up, what jobs we are considered for, how we are treated by the police, what our community social life is like—everything. Racism isn't just a matter of what's said aloud, or what many white people are secretly thinking, but the physical and intangible impact had on the lives of black and brown people by millions of tiny, sometimes imperceptible discriminations. In our recent memory, racism may have seemed to be declining, but it had not gone away, merely changed its presentation. There is fairly recent research documenting that a majority of white Americans

a Much of the information in this section comes from *The White Separatist Movement In The United States*, by Betty Dobratz and Stephanie L. Shanks-Meile. I found this book useful, but also strangely sympathetic to the white supremacist movement—for example, the authors refer to the racists they interviewed and studied by their preferred terms, "white separatists", or "racialists." I have chosen to use more negative terms when not directly quoting, as an expression of my political and ethical stance. Dobratz and Shanks-Meile express some qualms about their subjects—but also talk glowingly of their positive interactions with the racists, and seem to almost excuse their attitudes. The dimensionality of human beings is no excuse for their actions; very few people behave as vile monsters in all parts of their lives, and it is mainly just social prejudice that can sometimes make it seem otherwise. Supposedly objective, "even-handed" scholarship can serve to recuperate evil. I have no such pretensions around objectivity—white supremacists are my enemies.

believe both that black people are inferior and lazy and that discrimination against people of color is a thing of the past. Racism is so widespread in the United States that politicians routinely use it to win votes. George Wallace, the famous Alabama white supremacist of the 1960s, cynically capitalized on these sentiments for political gain. David Duke, a white supremacist who ran for President in 1988, had the opposite problem: he was a bit too blatantly connected to hate groups to win his election, but he connected with voters regardless:

> Howell and Wallace... argued that Duke's Nazi-Klan past prevented him from getting popular support for his views, but his issues were popular among whites across the country. Their research found that 1/3rd of whites held very intense racial feelings and that nationally whites' views were just less intense than the Louisiana voters who supported Duke. Whites tended to support symbolic racism expressed by general anti-black feelings and a belief that blacks "fall short of the American ideals of individualism and the work ethic." Electoral support for David Duke was "related to intense racial attitudes more than simple racial conservativism."

Duke's racist populism emotionally united his white supporters, but did little to attack those who may have actually been oppressing them. "...analysts have argued that Duke benefited from structural changes in the economy and political culture as he articulates a form of anti-establishment politics that basically ignores the establishment. He defends the little people by directing their anger against the littler people, not towards the big people, with wealth and privilege, at the top. It is an odd kind of populism that divides the people rather than uniting them against the elites." This demogoguery is a common aspect of racist populism, particularly one that seeks to win power within the establishment. Trump's popularity has inspired David Duke to run for state office again.

Far from making a blunder when he demonstrated racist attitudes that initially lost him the support of the Republican establishment, Donald Trump has shown a large portion of the American public exactly what they were looking for in a presidential candidate. He is supported by self-identified white supremacists,[b] and by the casually racist, and by those who claim to just like

b Reporter Evan Osnos, describing his pre-election conversations with white supremacists about Trump: "What they're saying is that Donald Trump may not win the presidency, but what he's doing is clearing out space in politics for ideas that were no longer possible - that were previously impossible to express. So what he's saying is that - and I encountered this over and over again as I talked to people who considered - who know that

his "other policies" (rather like reading Playboy for the articles); the common denominator is a simple resonance with the sort of divisive populism previously deployed by David Duke. According to the research of Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, Pat Buchanan and President Bush, Sr. also deliberately appealed to racist attitudes to gain white campaign support—attitudes more extreme than those they personally held. More recently, as white supremacy has focused its attention on migrants, we have seen the rise of Joe Arpaio[c], the Arizona sheriff who has been so militantly enforcing immigration law, and who administers the "Tent City" outdoor jail, which he himself has called a concentration camp; and Kris Kobach, the Kansas attorney general who has written brutally racist anti-immigrant laws for several states. There is every connection to be made between reactionary forces, and not only on the basis of race; the connections between the racist community and the violent anti-choice movement should not, for example, surprise us.

Prominent white supremacist Tom Metzger argued against these politicians from a racist perspective:

> Forget the conservative right. They will never campaign for racial revolution. They deny, deny, deny racism all the way down the track. In fact, most are scared stiff of even being called racist. Deal only with those who are proud to be racist. Even your enemies have no respect for closet racists. There's nothing more sad than to listen to a conservative right winger on the air qualifying everything he says with "I'm not a racist. I'm not like those people." They are sickening and need to be destroyed.

White supremacist groups arise from and are compatible with our structurally and culturally racist, white-dominated society, but see themselves as so different from it as to disdain most far-right politicians as sell-outs, traitors to the racist cause. From the other side of the racist spectrum, whites who

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they are way out on the fringe of American politics - that they say Donald Trump is allowing our ideas to be discussed in a way that they never have been before. Many of the people that I spoke to would say to me, look, I can only talk to you if you don't use my name, for instance, because if I'm identified publicly I'll lose my job. I work for a mainstream organization. And what they're hoping is that by having somebody like Donald Trump talking about immigration in the kinds of terms - not exactly the way that they do - they obviously - he's not using at all the kind of language that neo-Nazi groups use, but he's talking about it in very harsh terms that that will create permission. It will give a validation in some sense. And that that may be the most enduring legacy." (*Fresh Air,* 2015.)

c While Arpaio's racial profiling has finally earned him a Department of Justice investigation, this does not mean his excesses were in violation of the spirit of the enterprise; it is just sometimes strategically helpful for those in power to "water the tree of liberty with the blood of tyrants" once everyone has started suspecting it is rotten to the core.

"merely" hold racist opinions usually see themselves as very different from conscious racists. And, since the dominant culture of the United States is fundamentally structured by white supremacy, "whites who hold racist opinions" means, on one level or another, all white people. Acknowledging this, while it erodes the idea of natural purity, does not instead assign original sin; white supremacy is not an ultimate condemnation based on skin color. Some white people have deliberately chosen to become anti-racists: to struggle towards consciousness, out of the dream of whiteness, which, after all, is a social construct like any other.[d] In light of that possibility, identifying and deliberately acting as a racist is a choice for which people should certainly be held accountable. As both being an anti-racist and a self-identified racist are in vogue today, what are the common threads between our moment and those that preceded it? What justifications are used by white people who hold racist opinions to make the leap of identity implied by joining an explicitly racist group?

class

Dobratz and Shanks-Meile comment editorially:

> We grow weary of newspaper and television statements about how well this economy is doing when it is doing well only for those at the top, especially the top 5 percent. Eighty percent have made little if any gain and the bottom 20 percent are becoming even more disadvantaged. Economic inequality is not declining. Many Americans believe that they have not benefited from the growing concentration of wealth in the hands of a few; a perception also expressed by most of our research subjects... True, not every person joins the movement because of feeling economically disadvantaged, but financial loss and job insecurity have motivated many to seek the movement for a sense of collective identity. This is in response to what they perceive as a multicultural society that has forgotten white people, rejects "white power, white pride", and forces integration by government edict.

While Marxists and anarchists argue that capitalism causes joblessness, poverty, economic inequality, and many other social ills by design, we see racism as the direct ally of capitalism in this endeavor: it is both the administrator of real death and social death, justifying the living death of poverty for those

d While it is possible for people of color to be racist towards other people of color, I am discussing white supremacy, and therefore white racism, throughout this piece. See Tim Wise's *White Like Me* for an exploration of white anti-racism, allyship, and the racism inherent in being a white citizen of the United States.

whom benefit from it. Every poverty chart in the United States shows that black, Latino, and Native American people are disproportionately more likely to be poor than whites. Racists argue that is because of an inherent inequality between races... while asserting that poor white people are, *unlike* poor people of color, only the victims of the system. In fact, they blame social welfare systems that distribute food, cash, and medical assistance to people of color for the impoverishment of America, although each of those systems are accessed heavily by white people. This felt discrepancy only heightens the frustrated anger of white reactionaries. As *Night Vision* puts it: "The number of capitalist niches reserved for white men keep shrinking, step by step, just as the u.s. economy and wage levels seem to be permanently falling into an unknown 21st century. White men are really confused, like a gunman who keeps clicking the trigger not believing his gun is on empty. But they aren't going to give up, because they can't."

Some racists hold the "Third Position," which calls for supporting revolutionary racial nationalism against the twin evils of capitalism and communism. (This follows the political reasoning of the National Socialists, who wanted to nationalize a basically capitalist system.) They believe they are outside the Left/Right continuum. By their logic, the profit motive must be subordinated to the best interest of the white race, while traditional conservatives are on the side of the wealthy alone. Some racists oppose traditional Leftist targets like NAFTA and big business, which racists view as part of the "Zionist New World Order conspiracy;" but the Left, they claim, supports racial nationalism only for other races, unfairly opposing it for whites.

However, some other U.S. racist groups, like the KKK, are adamantly opposed to the Third Position, finding it too socialist: "The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan rejects the so-called Third Position and its Marxist dogma of 'class struggle' as well as all other Jew infested political and social teachings that would put schism between our racial brothers, such as Democrat vs. Republican, North vs. South, Catholic vs. Protestant, rich vs. poor, workers vs. bosses ad nauseam." Here, the anti-capitalist analysis of race as a tool to divide the poor so they do not rise up united to fight capitalism is flipped on its head. Tom Metzger presentss racism as a *solution* to the problems caused by capitalism: when people come together on a racial basis, he says, they can no longer be divided along class lines. Because communism is connected in white supremacist minds to "Semitism," big government, and Leftism,

e This 1990s text on neo-colonialism, though astonishingly insightful in its analysis in many ways, has some questionable things to say about Jewish people.

they don't see it as a viable alternative to capitalism. Some seem to assume that, once the race war is over and other races are extinct or completely subjugated, there will be such abundance that the matter isn't relevant; the economic question remains pleasantly fuzzy in their minds.

Many of the general themes of modern U.S. white supremacy are familiar to us from our study of fascism; material conditions, and national unity in the face of them, are motives common between them. And, as we know, racism is not necessary to fascism—but some form of essentialism is. It is not possible to unify everyone on the basis of any one attribute unless you preach the *naturalness* and importance of that attribute. While racism certainly inflects neoliberal governance on every level, it is necessarily left somewhat in the shadows, because it is important to that form of power to be able to inflect its discourse differently at different times. Today, we are united as a country; tomorrow, as fans of a particular musician. Today, race unifies an "us" against a them; tomorrow, it will be masked as those whom, we are told, believe in religious tolerance and human rights against those whom, we are told, do not. Fascism's myth is a bit simpler: we are all oppressed, and it is the fault of the traditional Others, and if we fight them or hold them at bay, we can build a better future, the future of the past. America can be great again, just as soon as we get these outsiders to stop sponging off of us. These are familiar narratives... and they are fascist narratives.

white pride

Another strong factor in the choice to join the white supremacist movement is the loss of identity generated by the alienation of late-stage capitalism. Many white people envy the ethnic and cultural identity people of other races in the US possess; some, therefore, promote white love for the white race... the other side of the coin from cultural appropriation, a white liberal response to this feeling.

This is self-evidently foolish: the poverty of the white culture they inhabit blinds these people to the fact that they already live in a white-dominant society. On the face of it, white pride may seem little different from black pride or black separatism, if one comes to the question with no analysis and a pretended objectivity... and, in fact, black and white separatists have met at least once to discuss the possible compatibilities of their goals. In practical terms, nothing could be more different. When a dominant race and culture celebrates itself, it generally means denigrating and oppressing others, and responding to the perceived threat from them—gathering for

the reactionary attack. For a non-dominant culture, such self-celebration or desire for separation is more about survival—self-defense. Secondarily, this desire affirms that race is a real thing that matters, drawing essentialist racial or cultural lines: that people of color are naturally different, which always means inferior when said by whites; or that cultures are completely different, inviolable, unmixable, and that multiculturalism is responsible for all of the woes of society... denying the long, peaceful, multicultural and cosmopolitan tradition of much of the world.

Once you see yourself as an outsider, you look for others like you. Like most subcultures, the racist subculture serves as a welcoming and affirming one for some white racists, those who feel particularly exploited, oppressed, angry at their perceived displacement in the world. Skinheads, for example, talk about feeling scared, abandoned, in need of physical and emotional support; their gangs give them a sense of community as well as material benefits. Many in various white supremacist "communities" suffer from mental illness or other difficulties that have led them to feel unwanted, rejected, cast out from society; this is much like the online "incel" community, young men who believe no one will ever sleep with them, who therefore feel angry and betrayed and alone. Christopher Harper-Mercer and Elliot Rodger both murdered people explicitly for these reasons. *Ressentiment* is a nasty pus that can spill out in many directions.

gender

Gender is a substantial and complex part of the motivation to join the organized racist subculture. The author of *Homegrown Hate* comments:

> In many cases it was the fathers who led the farm to foreclosure, who had to close the ma-and-pa grocery store when Wal-Mart moved in a few miles up the road, who got laid off from their high-skilled and high-paying manufacturing job when the company decided to relocate in the Philippines or Mexico. And the rage of the sons is fueled by those three entangled streams: racial entitlement, class-based rage, and the shame of emasculation. It is a lethal brew.

Dobratz and Shanks-Meile point to the role of Vietnam veterans in contributing to racist paramilitary culture: "American men dreamed about war and warrior images, including the use of force to return 'illegal aliens' in the U.S.... and the hordes of non-whites in the Third World... to their proper place." The trauma of war tends to have violent ripples throughout

society; we can remember the role many Arditi played in Mussolini's rise after returning, similarly disenfranchised, from WWI. For men who feel they cannot cope with the change in social understandings of what it means to be a good man, the loss of a trade or the end of a deeply affecting time in the military can be the final straw; someone must be to blame.

Many white supremacists have strongly conservative notions about the role of women in society—frequently, they believe women should raise strong Aryan children and keep the home. Birth control is often discouraged, and the abortion of white fetuses is seen as white genocide. Children are generally homeschooled so they may be raised within the racist, strictly gendered ideology, and kept from interacting with children of color. Much of this happens with the willing participation of white supremacist women; even as they experience gendered violence, they enforce and reproduce it.[f] By the lights of this ideology, liberal feminism is only for Jewish lesbians; motherhood is the most glorious role for a woman; when a woman works, it undermines the masculinity of men… and so on. Some white supremacist women even assert that this essentialist enforcement is *anti-sexist*—it respects the differences between men and women, thus stopping the general social tendency towards gender-based subjugation.

The ability of these elements of white supremacy to act as a mainstreaming, domesticating element within society while transmitting racist and sexist ideologies is a very serious source of its power; only misogyny explains the dearth of literature on this issue. Consciously asserting their gendered roles as literal and figurative reproducers of the Aryan people, white supremacist women work together to organize a long-term, intergenerational racist community. Their deliberately "feminine" efforts turn what might otherwise be a marginalized group of angry men into a sustainable movement that includes homemaking and children. However, this exact project is not shared by the entire movement; taking things a step away from homey Americana racism and into Odinist "warrior" racism, David Lane argues that, in the context of the battle of the sexes, women ought to fight each other for the attention of men. He thinks that women should be cheerleaders for men, and that problems between the sexes are due to women instead competing with men; men, he says, feel no urge to protect or provide for such women. However blatantly sexist, his analysis leaves room for directive female political involvement; while "family values" white supremacists often expect

f This is not to single out white supremacist women per se; their experience is different from culturally mainstream women's participation in patriarchy mainly insofar as it is acknowledged as an intentional ideological practice.

women to stay out of the public realm, in Lane's vision they are speaking and acting alongside men, though in a particular gendered way. Gender roles and enforcement are also performed quite differently in skinhead racist communities, in which women are sometimes seen as comrade-warriors operating from a place of rough equality.

political structures

White supremacists generally have a strong critique of the US government, opposing policies such as legal abortion for white women, affirmative action, gun control, tolerance of undocumented immigration, multicultural education, and foreign aid. However, this does not prevent them from engagement. When surveyed, white supremacists showed mixed feelings about using the electoral system: a quarter were opposed, and half in favor; of those in favor, less than half would run on Republican or Democratic tickets. 15% of those surveyed identified with the Populist Party. 1/5th of the interviewees in Dobratz and Shanks-Meile's study had personally run for office. Many conservative political groups have close ties to hate groups.

While the media and scholars often see racists as simply ultraconservative, at least part of the milieu sees itself as revolutionary. As white supremacists put it, "movement" people tend to believe that the federal government is basically historically benevolent, that evil or deceived politicians have temporarily taken control of power, and that, if they can just awaken the masses, they can get our country back; so-called "resistance" people have a more revolutionary stance. Some, of course, straddle the fence. One white supremacist said, foretelling the darkest timeline:

> It would be easier to bring down this decaying system from the inside, everybody knows that. I am in your colleges, your military, and soon your police force. We are deeply embedded. It is important to voice our opinion in government. Perhaps the cleansing of this system can occur through peaceful political means. It is when this approach fails that we need to take up arms. This country was built on revolution. It will go down on revolution if need be.

There's a strong tendency towards conspiracy theories: Dobratz and Shanks-Meile summarize, "White racialists have historically tended to perceive an interlocking of Communists, Jews, certain American politicians, and international bankers, which are now resulting in the New World Order." Perhaps the above-quoted racist needs to believe he is part of a similar

conspiracy in order to have a sense of security. This is not to entirely discredit his rather terrifying persective: as we have explored, the United States *is*, on many levels, a racist conspiracy.

On a structural level, conscious white supremacy today takes the form of hundreds of independent or splinter groups, with some unity in origin and motivation, but fairly intricate disagreements. In 2002, the Southern Poverty Law Center counted 443 hate-based websites; more recently, the SPLC said: "Currently, there are 1,018 known hate groups operating across the country, including neo-Nazis, Klansmen, white nationalists, neo-Confederates, racist skinheads... border vigilantes and others... Since 2000, the number of hate groups has increased by 69 percent." The white supremacist movement tends to be fairly transitory, with groups often coalescing and dissipating within a year. Some see this as a strength; William J. Murray of SS Action Group wrote to Dobratz and Shanks-Meile:

> I don't think there are too many factions. There are as many factions as there are ideas, and this diversity is not necessarily bad. No one person or group has all the answers. Another point is that it is better to be de-centralized due to the repressive power of our government. It makes it harder to bring us down when you have so many groups to attack. Morris Dees was able to bring down the largest Klan group in the U.S. because of this. Had they stayed split into smaller local and autonomous cells, this wouldn't have occurred.

Morris Dees, by the way, was the founder and director of the Southern Poverty Law Center, a group of civil rights lawyers and information-sharing hub; he was indeed able to significantly impair several racist organizations by bringing lawsuits against them. Notably, the group White Aryan Resistance was decimated after a judge decided that Tom Metzger (and his son John), who founded the organization, were partially responsible for an Ethiopian man in Portland, OR being beaten to death, having told a skinhead leader to motivate and organize skinheads in the area. While other skinheads actually carried out the attack, the judge ruled that the Metzgers were vicariously liable. The judgment totaled 12.5 million dollars. In retaliation, a particularly militant white supremacist group, the Silent Brotherhood, planned to assassinate Dees, but were unable to carry out their plan.

The modern organized racist milieu tends to generate far more rhetoric than action. One reason for this is the sort of "vanguard of the vanguard" dynamic that supremacists described in interviews. Dennis Mahon, Oklahoma WAR

Consultant, currently serving 40 years for a bombing that wounded a black city official in Phoenix, explained to Dobratz and Shanks-Meile:

> By the "Movement", we mean the activities and ideology of most Judeo-Christian, Right-Wing, Anti-Communist, Patriotic groups (C.R.A.P.) The CRAP usually consists of most Klan groups, patriotic Christian churches, patriotic veterans groups and so on. By Aryan or White Resistance we mean groups like White Aryan Resistance, National Alliance, Church of the Creator, skinhead groups, and some radical white survivalist groups... CRAP movement people believe that the masses of sheep, called the American people, have the courage and intelligence to fight for their own destiny. Resistance people study history and know that it's the 1 or 2% of revolutionary zealots who change history, while the sheep follow and obey those who wield power.

Despite this attempted dichotomization, generated by self-conscious, macho avowals of being more extreme, harder, more violently serious than everyone else, there is a lot of overlap within white supremacy. "Resistance" people—elitist racists—are not so different from populist racists, who are not so separate from mainstream legitimized racist groups, which exist within the context of structural white supremacy. This is only another example of the interrelated dichotomy between elitist and populist approaches that exists within both explicitly fascist and Leftist revolutionary history. As anti-racists, we have to avoid repeating the sort of false dichotomies these white supremacists enforce in our own critique. We must see the entire spectrum of racism as a serious problem, rather than making the tactical error of focusing only on the most violent or extreme members of white supremacist groups. Any such focus tends to exceptionalize these people, to present them as aberrations rather than the most obvious symptom of a general sickness. The U.S. criminal justice system tends to present them as either mentally ill—therefore incompetent of seriously practicing their beliefs, which no sane person would follow through on—or innocent, in which case their racist beliefs are irrelevant to the attack of which they are accused, and hold no inherent evil. In fact, it is their sanity and specific innocence that are irrelevant to their participation in and acting from a white supremacist society. We must also, however, avoid the temptation to see the most extreme as unimportant, inevitable, not a problem compared to the larger issue of systematic racism. They are real enough for the people they kill.

As Murray wrote above, decentralized cell organization has become increasingly popular among racists. Dobratz and Shanks-Meile say:

> The philosophy of some of the more militant in the movement has shifted towards "leaderless resistance", which uses but modifies the Communist cell model where a leader directs the activities of several cells, but people within each cell do not know participants in other cells. Beam (1992:1-7) strongly advocates leaderless resistance where individuals and groups operate independently and do not even report to a central leader... Leaderless resistance participants should react similarly to a variety of events because they share the same ideology. Those not truly committed to the movement are likely to be weeded out... WAR (1993a:5) suggests that leaderless resistance "tactics automatically improve damage control immensely" and "very loose networks and isolated individuals make a very poor informant strategy."

To anyone most comfortable with a formal, NGO sort of activism, or with the structure of traditional governments or corporations, the white supremacist movement's factions and lack of coordinated leadership structure seems to affirm its fringe nature and make it seem fairly unthreatening. Unfortunately, the movement's shift towards this kind of self-organization may very well point to its growing strategic power. For small, less massively powerful populations, asymmetric warfare based in personal conviction and resonating affinities has been much more realistic and successful than more open organizing, which tend to be either immediately repressed or recuperated and assimilated; this has been notable in virtually every conflict in which the U.S. has unsuccessfully participated in the last fifty years. A totalitarian, or even a confederated organizational structure, isn't sustainable, adaptable, generalized, and resistant to repression in the ways that mobile and decentralized cells are, regardless of the ethical standpoint of the participants. Tactics, including social structures, can be used by anyone, and have been. Arendt reminds us that, despite our mythology of the rigidly defined Nazi society, "The body politic of the country [Nazi Germany] is shock-proof because it is shapeless."

Some racists suggest that this organizational model works only for the *Ubermensch* among them:

> John McLaughlin... pointed out that for some, leaderless resistance is a

> 'cop-out' for avoiding organizational activities and commitment. He also suggested that since the movement has had problems finding competent leadership, leaderless resistance has sounded attractive to some. On the other hand, McLaughlin (1993:6) suggested that "for certain quality individuals because of their job, or circumstances, or geographical location, leaderless resistance is the proper and best form of action. 'Der Kampfhund,' a director of Northern Hammer Skinheads, tended to agree with McLaughlin... 'Leaderless resistance is great for the intelligent, resourceful person with a certain amount of military training. The masses, even of our race, will always need some type of structure...'

While we tend to hear about white supremacists in connection to hate crimes, most racist hate crimes are committed by people who do not belong to any racist group. This supports my claim that, while white supremacists are the most outspoken and extreme in their views, racism and related violence are not so easily isolated. Sociologists studying hate crimes found three types of motivations for hate crimes:

> 1) thrill or excitement;
> 2) defensive, such as protecting one's neighborhood;
> and 3) mission hate crimes that are carried out by people dedicated to bigotry, frequently Klan, National Socialist, or skinhead members. Interestingly, in [a] study of the Boston Police Department, only one of 169 hate crimes could be classified as a 'mission' offense.

When organized racists do commit violent acts, their motives and tactics are generally more nuanced than those behind either these quotidian explosions or calm, studied practices of terrorism. Their violence is an interaction between the place the group occupies in society, its perception of danger and the need to defend or pre-emptively attack, and the response of the government, as either its primary or secondary opponent. The role many white supremacists believe they play—revolutionaries whose revolution has not yet come—is a precarious one: some believe they must build a movement, while others believe they are in the vanguard. As one racist said:

> Violence works, contrary to the nonsense of popular society, when the oppressed take up arms, the oppressor is forced to recognize and appease him. In the last few years, this country has taken Europe's lead in attempting to suppress our movement's ability to communicate to the people. By God, if they will not hear our voices, they will hear our bullets. The movement has become more militant the world over, war is coming and there is no stopping it. We are not like the old men of the

movement who are waiting for some great catastrophe to start the war. We are going to start it and the world will take us seriously. This is inevitable.

The Silent Brotherhood, mentioned earlier as the would-be assassins of Morris Dees, is the only American white separatist group to have been involved in widespread terrorism, although many others have committed individual acts. Active in the 1980s, the Brotherhood counterfeited money, robbed banks, and held up armored cars to fund their race war; they also bombed a synagogue, and were complicit in five murders. Eventually most members were captured or killed by the FBI.

Given this example of violent activity, why does the government allow racist groups likely to produce such attacks to exist—especially those with a clearly anti-government stance? While acknowledging the fundamental racism of everyday white society as a major source of this tolerance, I believe it has much to do with the gray zone in which our society generally functions now. Ferber points out that the post-9/11 Justice Department has "pursued policies that make little or no distinction among nonviolent civil disobedience, vandalism, terrorism, and armed revolution... the government frequently justifies surveillance and infiltration of dissident groups and detention of dissidents by blurring the lines between ideology and methodology." Truly, tactics matter less than ideology; no matter their political orientation, dissident groups are seen as a threat, whether or not they take illegal action, and they are monitored and pruned rather than suppressed. "Constitutional freedom of expression" is more a biopolitizing of the control of dissent than a real freedom.

We live in a state of permanent war, institutionalized conflict. It does not serve the government to end crime or violence; it is much better to let it exist as a safety valve, to contain and manage it. Everyone can deplore obviously horrifying racist attacks… and feel fine ignoring the fact that one in three black men go to prison, a much more significant factor in the everyday life of the United States than the occasional Nazi action. The government can make an example out of groups like the Brotherhood, and allow the racist ties of prominent politicians to go unexamined. It is not hypocrisy or a failure, but a deliberate strategy of domestic control, deployed against both the Left and the Right. Existing between repression and assimilation under the spotlight of government surveillance, movements are easily managed and remain totally irrelevant to the staged interplay of interest groups and Washington lunches. For that to change, the racist movement will have to catch fire with the spark of racist populism, as they have done before with great sucesss... and as they are possibly doing today.

mythology

Glorifying past white civilization is an integral part of fascist ideology; at its base, it is both a justification of current white supremacy and a justification of their ideal authoritarian, "merit-based," but nature-*decreed* rule. As we discussed in section 2, this took the form of glorifying the "Volk" among the populists of pre-Nazi Germany and the Romans for Mussolini—and it continues to inspire white supremacists today. Dobratz and Shanks-Meile observe that, while the Left tends to blame social inequality for the problems we face in the world, racist organizers tend to blame a lack of personal discipline and responsibility. Their mythological sources of inspiration for greater self-governance tend to call back to the *Ubermensch*, to an explicitly racist form of Odinism, or to the particularly American ideals of the cowboy, the sheriff, the Indian-hunter.

The "softer" side of this kind of rhetoric focuses on love for the white race, and a fear of its "extermination" from the impact of multiracial children, diminishing white birth rates, integration, the birth rates of people of color, immigration, and white people losing economic power to people of color. White separatists sometimes even claim that they hold no hostility for people of color, but simply want to preserve their own race and culture. David Lane's "14 Words," discussed earlier, are the most generally accepted summation of the goals of white power among its participants: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children." If this statement read "We must secure the existence of humanity and a future for our children," it would be nearly the most inoffensive statement possible. However, the beliefs buried under "our own race" and "white children" can be spelled out thus:

1. Humans are divided naturally into different physical types.
2. Such physical traits as they display are intrinsically related to their culture, personality and intelligence.
3. On the basis of their genetic inheritance, some groups are innately superior to others.

With that at its base, the other nine words give a Manichaen urgency and a sense of purpose to these five—they imply the threat posed by people of color and the possible lack of a white future. This feeling is expanded upon in this quote from a Christian Identity text:

> Identity does not accept the typical fundamentalist view of the rapture, which is that those who are saved will not have to experience a period

> of Tribulation including wars and other dangers; rather, Identity looks forward to fighting the forces of evil during the Tribulation. At present, whites in the movement see themselves as struggling against the current government's policies related to civil rights and affirmative action. The government is committing racial treason, but racial redemption will follow.

This "the end is near" atmosphere ties in neatly with the sentiments of militia groups—who are usually, again, members of the most socially privileged race in the U.S. who feel their position slipping and regard the potential loss of that primacy with dread and fear, arming themselves and training against who knows what possibilities. Occasionally this erupts in violence, but largely it is an emotional climate, a way of life, a persistent paranoia, a dryness of the air. Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan is achingly familiar; we all know what this means. But, as a friend put it, the project seems to be "all Rome and no racecar"—though there are tech billionaires and transhumanists promoting racecars like mad, there does not presently seem to be much crossover between their forces and those of the alt-right. God help us if that changes. Perhaps this is an opening, a space of slippage, a crack we may widen, through sharing stories of survival and complicity between ourselves: their victims, or their survivors. I do not think we should plan our futures—but I think we can possibly intervene in the narrative and material reality of our present.

Part II. Afro-pessimism and black America: forever-outside

> There is something organic to black positionality that makes it essential to the destruction of civil society.
>
> —Frank Wilderson

> People who treat other people as less than human must not be surprised when the bread they have cast upon the waters comes floating back to them, poisoned.
>
> —James Baldwin

The framework I find most useful for understanding and combating white supremacy as it stands in the United States today—whether manifested within populist or elitist movements, whether enforced by grand institutions or by micro-aggressions—has emerged from the discourse of Afro-pessimism. I will discuss the work of two participants within this discourse, Frank Wilderson and Saidiya Hartman[g]; I will also refer to the work of several of their fellow-travelers.

In his essay "The Black Liberation Army and the Paradox of Political Engagement," Frank Wilderson lays out the central thesis of Afro-pessimism: black people (specifically black people in the United States, but, by extension of American hegemony, black people everywhere) are excluded from full participation in the human community. This is the legacy of slavery: having been so long excluded from rights, from citizenship, and therefore—in the era of the nation-state—excluded from humanity, black skin has become the marker of the *alien*. Wilderson does not use the word "alien," but I use it here in part to point towards more people excluded along raced lines of Otherness—unwanted migrants of all colors. Wilderson's great shortcoming, in my eyes, is his failure to either extend his analysis to the experiences of non-black people of color and migrants of various ethnicity, or to say frankly that he does not understand those experiences and cannot speak to them.[h]

With Hartman, to whom I shall return shortly, Wilderson argues that being placed forever-outside the human community means that every act of

g Hartman has not, as far as I am aware, identified herself as part of this discourse; but she is usually included in it by others.

h This is with the exception of Native American people, whom he scantily acknowledges in a footnote in his 2003 essay. He says they are not given access to participation in U.S. civil society as other non-white, non-black people of color are, in his rubric, because indigenous genocide is "a precondition for the idea of America." I do no better than him, to be sure, by referencing his footnote in a footnote.

black resistance, survival, and daily life—all one and the same, under white supremacy—is a desperate act. When white people take political action, even if it is quite illegal and desperate, it is with the assumption that they will be heard by white people as potential equals, or at least as humans; most black people in the United States have been given no reason to form that central assumption. (Some black commentators suggest that both Obama's successes and failures are in part because he failed to acknowledge or understand how significant U.S. racism was: "He didn't know his whites.")

loss

To examine this, Wilderson compares the political messages of the European direct action groups RAF and IRA with one from Assata Shakur, written while she was incarcerated for alleged participation in Black Liberation Army activity. Shakur's statement begins: "Black brothers, Black sisters, i want you to know that i love you and i hope that somewhere in your hearts you have love for me. ...Like all other Black revolutionaries, amerika is trying to lynch me." Shakur is expressing basic uncertainty that even other black people will hear and care for her, her political project, and her plight. This is because, Wilderson says, there is no "third term," no way for Shakur to be heard or understood. The "third term," the mediator between any black person and the world, "is slavery, which is to say the abyss of social death, as opposed to a site of culture or economic plentitude, like a lost nation." There is nowhere to which a former slave (or the descendants of those slaves) may return, nothing to reclaim, not even a land that is occupied by others. This, Wilderson implies, is the fundamental difference between the black experience of white supremacy and the experiences had by other people of color, whom he elsewhere terms "civil society's junior partners." While the relationship between white and black people is a relationship marked by violence—not a mythically neutral violence that could flow either way, but the real, material history of white violence against black people on every level imaginable—the relationship between black people is marked by loss.

Saidiya Hartman writes evocatively of this loss in her book *Lose Your Mother*. When she went to Ghana to study the history of the cross-Atlantic slave trade, Ghanians often refered to her as *obruni*, stranger.

> I was the stranger in the village, a wandering seed bereft of the possibility of taking root. Behind my back people whispered, *dua ho mmire*: a mushroom that grows on the tree has no deep soil. Everyone avoided the word slave, but we all knew who was who... *Obruni* forced me to acknowledge that I didn't belong anyplace. The domain of the stranger

> is always an elusive *elsewhere*. I was born in another country, where I also felt like an alien and which in part determined why I had come to Ghana. I had grown weary of being stateless.

But, the experience taught her, there was no return to Africa possible. "Being a stranger concerns not only matters of familarity, belonging, and exclusion but as well involves a particular relation to the past. If the past is another country, then I am its citizen."

Black loss is not confined to the original loss of home, family, mother that occurred in cross-Atlantic slavery; those losses are re-enacted again and again by the depredations of white supremacy. Hartman recalls a trip to rural Alabama with her great-grandfather:

> ...Poppa would stick his hand out the window at regular intervals and declare, 'Land used to be owned by black folks.'... Looking at all the land worked by us but that was no longer ours triggered Poppa's memory. No doubt he remembered his grandfather, whose land had been stolen by a white neighbor upon his death, forcing his wife and children off the property. White neighbors had poisoned his well and killed his farm animals, trying to drive him off the land, but only after his death did they succeed in evicting his family and taking his property with a fraudulent deed. In the middle of explaining how black farmers lost it all—to night riders, banks, and the government—Poppa drifted into a story about slavery, because for men like Poppa and my great-great-grandfather, to be landless was to be a slave.

As they lost their Southern land many black farmers moved into the Midwest, only to be met with "sundown towns" and Jim Crow; further West, Oregon quickly passed its white-only law to prevent their entry. Thus chased from coast to coast, only to be prevented from reaching the sea, black people in the United States were forced into landless urban life, and into segregated communities within those cities—dispossessed yet again.[i] These losses are acts of profound, lifeshaping violence, at once intimate and broad.

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i The Black/Land Project, a presentation of which I was privileged to attend, is currently gathering and reflecting back stories from black communities about land loss, the historical trauma of that loss (which they relate to Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart's previously referenced work around Lakota historical trauma), and current black relationship to land within urban environments. The importance of their work cannot be overstated.

Assata Shakur's statement returns again and again to the violence she has experienced; the endurance of which, Wilderson points out, is not exceptional, but is the normal condition of black life in America. There is no reason to predict that she would have not faced it if she had refrained from taking political action; there is no reason to predict that it would stop if she began cooperating with her captors; nor could she likely therapize away her trauma from this lifelong experience of violence. "The Slave's relationship to violence is not contingent, it is gratuitous—it bleeds out beyond the grasp of narration, from the Symbolic to the Real, where therapy and politics have no purchase."

There is, therefore, no demand possible for the black revolutionary to make—or, rather, every demand is *every demand*, because each one calls for the absolute transformation of the world such that it is no longer recognizable. Black people are not given real political power within the nation-state, because they are not recognized as human enough to begin to hold it. This is why Obama's election had such emotional resonance even for people who felt resolutely cynical about America—for a moment, it seemed like the Dream was possible, that we could all be human together under a sane government led by someone who represented the historically disenfranchised. But we knew even at the time that this was a mere restructuring of power. By the time he left office, Obama had commuted more prison sentences than the previous seven presidents combined; his administration had also deported more people than the previous nineteen presidents combined.

Black people pointing out racism are often accused of "reverse racism," of perpetuating a kind of social violence of their own; Assata herself has a two million dollar bounty on her head, a price much higher than the state would pay for someone who was charged with an unpoliticized crime of a similar nature. Baldwin answers this accusation well:

> This formulation, in terms of power—and power is the arena in which racism is acted out—means absolutely nothing. The powerless, by definition, can never be 'racists', for they can never make the world pay for what they feel or fear except by the suicidal endeavor that makes them fanatics or revolutionaries, or both; whereas, those in power can be urbane and charming and invite you to those homes which they know you will never own. The powerless must do their own dirty work. The powerful have it done for them.

And this is a raced issue, not merely a question of the legitimacy of particular tactics. When the IRA issued communiqués against the British occupation of Ireland, they could be assured that everyone agreed that the topics under discussion—land, peace, happiness—had once existed, presently existed in contingent form, and could exist again. The "third term" were objects and myths shared between humans. Wilderson: "The question [the] communiqué poses is who will prevail at a conceptual level, not the question of who is alive and who is dead, as in the case of the Human and the Slave." Baldwin reflected on this discrepancy in regards to the tactical contrast between the white flower children and the black rebels of the 1960s:

> The blacks, for the most part, were not to be found with the flower children. In the eerie American way, they walked the same streets, were to be found in the same neighborhoods, were the targets of the same forces, seemed to bear each other no ill will—on the contrary indeed, especially from the point of view of the forces watching them—and yet they seemed to have no effect on each other, and they certainly were not together. The blacks were not putting their trust in flowers. They were putting their trust in guns.
>
> ...blacks had to be concerned with much more than their own private happiness or unhappiness. They had to be aware that this troubled white person might suddenly decide not to be in trouble and go home—and when he went home, he would be the enemy. Therefore, it was best not to speak too freely to anyone who spoke too freely to you, especially not on the streets of a nation that probably has more hired informers working for it, here and all over the world, than any nation in history. True rebels, after all, are as rare as true lovers, and in both cases, to mistake a fever for a passion can destroy one's life.

This ability to "decide not to be in trouble" is often now called privilege; but privilege implies that we begin all the same, and then a few are given merit badges and a few dunce caps, and treated accordingly. Wilderson is describing something far more profound: the divide between the living and the socially dead.

the undead

Achille Mbembe describes this social death as not only the precondition of black American experience, but the experience of many living under white supremacy and colonialization. He terms the operation of power that

generates and enforces this living death *necropolitics*, following Foucault's biopolitics. As I have previously noted, Foucault describes race as the power to administratively distribute death, according to the management needs of power, across a population, rather than individually executing those who have crossed the sovereign power. Mbembe expands on this analysis: if biopolitics is the management of life (the power to make live and let die), necropolitics is the management of *living death*: the power to make live while dead, and to make dead while still alive, often along raced lines. This differs from the previous state of life under sovereign power, which is itself still in play, but less relevant as a dominant paradigm: "to kill or to allow to live" is not the same as to keep a population in a constant state of misery and terror, in which death is always present and no one is allowed to simply live. Think of ISIS's mode of governance: an intricate, intimate brutality.

Arendt said of the necropolitical Nazi era: "The real horror of the concentration and extermination camps lies in the fact that the inmates, even if they happen to keep alive, are more effectively cut off from the world of the living than if they had died, because terror enforces oblivion. Here, murder is as impersonal as the squashing of a gnat." This impersonality does not lessen the cruelty of these conditions. Hartman says, about an "improved" prison built to hold slaves, "Indifferent to the spirit of reform, slaves continued to die. And a pile of corpses was not the kind of refuse that was of any use to the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa. A corpse was unresponsive to the logic of conversion that transformed dead men into commodities." In necropolitical environs, death is the ultimate and rarely granted escape, while full life is barely a dream. If you believe these horrors are limited to the past, you need only think of modern-day prisoners on hunger strike, chained to their hospital beds and force-fed through a tube.

This kind of power was created on multiple fronts: during black slavery in America; during the colonization of Africa; and during the state-sanctioned anti-Jewish segregations and pogroms in Europe throughout the last thousand years. Foucault and Mbembe find its modern realization in Nazi Germany. Foucault:

> No society could be more disciplinary or more concerned with providing insurance than that established, or at least planned, by the Nazis. Controlling the random element inherent in biological processes was one of the regime's immediate objectives. But this society in which insurance and reassurance were universal, this universally disciplinary and regulatory society, was also a society which unleashed murderous power, or in other

> words, the old sovereign right to take life. This power to kill, which ran through the entire social body of Nazi society, was first manifested when the power to take life, the power of life and death, was granted not only to the State but to a whole series of individuals, to a considerable number of people... Ultimately, everyone in the Nazi State had the power of life and death over his or her neighbors, if only because of the practice of informing, which effectively meant doing away with the people next door, or having them done away with.

However, this is not an exceptional horror; the state of exception has become, in fact, commonplace. By Mbembe's analysis, "Foucault states clearly that the sovereign right to kill... and the mechanisms of biopower are inscribed in the way all modern states function; indeed, they can be seen as constitutive elements of state power in modernity." We can think of Baldwin's observation above, that the streets of America are filled with informants; if this seems too paranoid (or out of date; now we might say "the Facebook feeds of America"), there is what he said in the same breath: that any white rebel child might decide to stop being in trouble, and return home, there to be the new enemy. Beyond any traditional concept of the informant lies everyday life in America, in which a white person calling the police on a black person and making virtually any accusation tends to have a tragic outcome. As for most Gentiles in the Nazi state, every white American—in degrees varying according to their class and gendered status—has the ability to kill. The impersonality of this ability, and its accompanying safety, is not a sign of its virtue. "Whiteness," Wilderson says, "...must first be understood as a social formation of contemporaries who do not magnetize bullets."

It is often easiest to understand terrible things when we think of how they formed in the "dark times," the times "far behind us." Mbembe discusses the role of violence in the past era of American slavery. As with Assata, there was no third term for communication between slave and owner; there is only escape, rebellion, and suicide on the one hand, and violence on the other. This is because the slave is property; this necessarily means they cannot be treated like a person.

> As an instrument of labor, the slave has a price. As a property, he or she has a value. His or her labor is needed and used. The slave is therefore kept alive but in a *state of injury*, in a phantom-like world of horrors and intense cruelty and profanity. The violent tenor of the slave's life is manifested through the overseer's disposition to behave in a cruel and intemperate manner and in the spectacle of pain inflicted on the slave's body. Violence,

> here, becomes an element in manners, like whipping or taking of the slave's life itself: an act of caprice and pure destruction aimed at instilling terror. Slave life, in many ways, is a form of death-in-life.

This slave life, far from being long behind us, is present today in the form of what Wilderson terms the "prison-slave." Black people in the United States, he says, are either prison-slaves or prison-slaves-in-waiting. While prison labor (truly a form of slavery, as it is performed under threat of violence and loss of privileges for pennies an hour) is certainly part of the American economy, this relationship of slavery has become less economic (as it still is in other occurrences of modern slavery), and more solely a condition of control charged by libidinous violence. And, of course, it serves the practical purpose of caging a surplus population for whom there is no room in the economy, thus forestalling the possibility of widespread revolt by these idle hands. Further, Wilderson argues, thinking of modern black life in America in terms of slavery *necessitates* thinking of it in terms of rebellion and revolution—as opposed to the discourse of workers who demand an expansion of rights, participants in capitalism who want to make the process of their exploitation more fair and efficient, or human rights for all members of the neoliberal, international village. "The worker calls into question the legitimacy of productive practices, while the slave calls into question the legitimacy of productivity itself." This is not only true in strictly economic terms, but libidinal and social terms as well: "from the incoherence of Black death, America generates the coherence of white life." If the condition of black life in America were to stop being one of permanent and pervasive death, everything would change; and it is necessary for everything to change to change this relationship. Wilderson:

> From the coherence of civil society, the Black subject beckons with the incoherence of civil war, a war that reclaims Blackness not as a positive value, but as a politically enabling site, to quote Fanon, of "absolute dereliction." It is a "scandal" that rends civil society asunder. Civil war, then, becomes the unthought, but never forgotten, understudy of hegemony. It is a Black specter waiting in the wings, and endless antagonism that cannot be satisfied (via reform or reparation), but must nonetheless be pursued to the death.

If it seems shocking to consider that, for black life in America to substantially or fundamentally improve, all of society must be uprooted, we must remember that our government was founded by slaveowners, and our capitalist economy significantly boosted by the sacrifice of the innumerable, yet completely individual and infinitely precious lives of black people.

> The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalised the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation. On their heels treads the commercial war of the European nations, with the globe for a theatre.
>
> —Karl Marx

> ...enslavement is not a parable. It is damnation. It is the never-ending night. And the length of that night is most of our history.
>
> -Ta-Nehisi Coates

The colonization of Africa, the theft of its resources, the subjugation of its peoples, and the inter-Atlantic transport of slaves were vital factors in the creation of international capitalism, Italian and Spanish fascism, and modern methods of bio/necro-political control. This fact has been scantily dealt with by white Marxists, though Marx himself pointed to it; I have only found it discussed in depth in the work of black scholars. It seems both shocking and obvious that this area of study has been neglected because of Eurocentrism.

Colonization provided an opportunity for a huge expansion of capitalism, because it was preceded by an unlimited primitive accumulation of resources and power. "Only the unlimited accumulation of power could bring about the unlimited accumulation of capital." But to make capital the center of our story is still to focus on the white experience of the colonization and enslavement of Africa; instead, we can choose to see slavery as the production of *misery*. Marx, on the immiseration of wage laborers:

> ...in proportion as capital accumulates, the lot of the laborer, be his payment high or low, must grow worse. The law, finally, that always equilibrates the relative surplus population or industrial reserve army, to the extent and energy of accumulation... establishes an accumulation of misery, corresponding with accumulation of capital. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the ame time accumulation of misery, agony of toil slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital.

Of course, we are used to thinking of slavery from the standpoint of its consumer, who benefited in gold coins, writs of sale, and payouts from insurance companies instead of being paid in misery itself, aside from the "incidental" pleasures of rapists and sadists. This way of thinking comes from the means of the process itself. Hartman: "In reading the annual reports of trading companies and the letters that traveled from London and Amsterdam to the trade outposts on the West African coast, I searched for the traces of the destroyed. In every line item, I saw a grave. Commodities, cargos, and things don't lend themselves to representation, at least not easily." I think we must consider the formal and the libidinal economy of slavery hand-in-hand; one is not the shameful side-effect of the other, but its necessary partner.

Slavery was both the full immiseration of the worker and the primitive accumulation of their bodies. These workers were not taking their labor to market to trade for commodities; their very bodies had been transformed, by force, into commodities. This is ultimate alienation. It is true that slavery existed long before capitalism and white supremacy did and continues to exist across race lines; I cannot know whether either era was/is "less bad" than the time of trans-Atlantic slavery. Since I am not interested in preserving slavery of *any* kind, it hardly matters.[j] Rather, I am concerned with the historical trauma that flows from this transformation of people into commodities; the ways in which the sale of slaves and their labor have materially enriched and ethically impoverished the descendents of their owners; the social relationships that flow from that past, and the possibility of troubling them. Specifically, we will explore the ways in which exploiting the African continent gave various European powers the ability to extend and continue their imperialism, technologies of control, and domination of their own working classes; and how the experience of colonizing Africa was foundational to the development of fascism.

from person to commodity

Hartman:

> Impossible to fathom was that all this death had been incidental to

j However, in brief, Howard Zinn: "African slavery is hardly to be praised. But it was far different from plantation or mining slavery in the Americas, which was lifelong, morally crippling, destructive of family ties, without hope of any future. African slavery lacked two elements that made American slavery the most cruel form of slavery in history: the frenzy for limitless profit that comes from capitalistic agriculture; the reduction of the slave to less than human status by the use of racial hatred, with the relentless clarity based on color, where white was master, black was slave." (Zinn 28) There is not room here for a discussion of modern slavery, but it is one of the most important questions of our era.

> the acquisition of profit and to the rise of capitalism. Today we might describe it as collateral damage. The unavoidable losses created in pursuit of the greater objective. Death wasn't a goal of its own but just a by-product of commerce, which has had the lasting effective of making negligible all the millions of lives lost. Incidental death occurs when life has no normative value, when no humans are involved, when the population is, in effect, seen as already dead. Unlike the concentration camp, the gulag, and the killing field, which had as their intended end the extermination of a population, the Atlantic trade created millions of corpses, but as a corollary to the making of commodities. To my eyes this lack of intention didn't diminish the crime of slavery but from the vantage of judges, juries, and insurers exonerated the culpable agents. In effect, it made it easier for a trader to countenance yet another dead black body or for a captain to dump a shipload of captives into the sea in order to collect the insurance, since it wasn't possible to kill cargo or to murder a thing already denied life.

Because *Capital*, the foundational text of Marxism, focuses primarily upon the creation of the male European working class—itself a product of patriarchy and the manufacture of whiteness—Marxists have largely ignored the roots of capitalism in the exploitation of women of all colors and Africans of all genders, even as today the continued primitive accumulation taking place in Southeast Asia is underanalyzed by Marxists. Silvia Frederici's vital text *Caliban and the Witch* opened a door upon the role that the repression of European women served in the process of the enclosure of the commons and the proletariatization of the European lower classes—but too often her work is seen as a stopping point, a useful addendum to the more important and central process of capitalist production, as is so often the case with the geneaologies of women's struggle. I do not believe European development can be understood without the context of its various imperial adventures and their contexts... nor do I care to continue centering the continent.

Marx himself knew the difference between wage slaves and actual slaves; by his analysis, the wage worker's labor is working capital, while the slave themselves, in their very person, are "fixed" or "dead" capital. Race became the determining factor between these two forms of embodied capital. Wilderson points out, following Barrett, that it would have been easier and more profitable for capitalists to enslave the white working class than to import slaves from Africa. However, there was something specific about white relationship to black bodies that made them targets for violence. "... capital was kick-started by approaching a particular body (a black body) with

direct relations of force, not by approaching a white body with variable capital. Thus, one could say that slavery is closer to capitalism's primal desire than is exploitation. It is a relation of terror as opposed to a relation of hegemony."

This relation of terror began within the colonization of Africa by various European powers... and they brought their work home with them. Despite its physical impact on human bodies, here was nothing natural about the creation of race, from either side of it. As Stafford and Shirley put it, "Laborers of European descent *became* white as they were subjected to the various forces of democracy, divisions of labor, nationalism, and war." Though the violence of race has been far from equally distributed, we know from Foucault that, in all cases, it is applied specifically to control the working class of all races. Sometimes this was done with the stick, and other times with the carrot. As the 1990s radical text *Night Vision* points out, "...participating in the settler invasion of North Amerika was a relatively easy way out of the desperate class struggle in England for those seeking a privileged life." This was the English immigrant experience; for others, things were worse, and their opportunities were more restricted. Francis Walker, who developed the Native American reservation system and later became the president of MIT, "popularized the Social Darwinistic theory that the new immigrants were 'beaten men from beaten races; representing the worst failures in the struggle for existence...' Thus as double failures in the 'survival of the fittest', these new European immigrants were only capable of being industrial slaves." This was, of course, before the National Origins Act of 1924, which severely limited European immigration from undesirable countries.

The authors of *Night Vision* go on to assert: "We're familiar, perhaps too familiar, with white racism, with its program for the superiority of the white race. But we can miss the same point by assuming that the white race is itself a natural thing. The white race thinks a certain way no matter how many years we scrub-a-dub-dub their minds with civil rights, for the same reason that a dope dealer's pit bull strains to attack, because they were deliberately constructed that way. As a race." But—while there are certainly documents pointing towards the conscious creation and enforcement of race by the wealthy—it was largely an *aleatory* movement rather than a deliberate conspiracy. The preponderance of violence, the blood soaking through daily life in the midst of a society based on slavery, carried its own necessary mental justifications: otherwise even white people could not have stood for it. These justifications, from their beginning, were rooted in racial essentialism.

Hartman reminds us, "As late as the eighteenth century, Europeans still imagined Africa as paradise or Eden. Not even Marx was able to resist the language of the Garden when recounting the violence that inaugurated modernity. In his essay on primitive accumulation, he described the scene of the Fall, which in his account was triggered not by the plucking of the apple but by the commercial hunting of black skins." Essentialism—and resistance, and survival, and joy, and love in the face of ultimate disaster—went on to generate the category of *African-American*, and the implications of loss behind it. "Slavery made your mother into a myth, banished your father's name, and exiled your siblings to the far corners of the earth.... The only sure inheritance passed from one generation to the next was this loss, and it defined the tribe...The Middle Passage was the birth canal that spawned this tribe. The Middle Passage was the death canal in which 'the African died to what was and what could have been.'"

This was all done for money, and it has not ended. *Night Vision*:

> Certainly, well over 100 million people have perished so far [written in the 1990s] in this worldwide restructuring of agriculture into the commodity system. What is cocaine, then, compared to wheat or vegetables? The neo-colonial economy has a commodity life that is unknown and invisible to our everyday experience. You can dream a nightmare world so irrational that your local supermarket is secretly stocked each night with products from an auschwitz.[k] Then you wake up, and discover it wasn't a dream... Because of the Afrikan slave and the business of trading them and the products of their labor, trans-Atlantic trade and the basis for european industrialization were established. Without the commodity of Afrikan slaves there would have been no u.s.a. ...They, Afrikan workers, give amerikkka their great natural resources and lifetimes of hard labor to make your consuming society work, free of charge, as an involuntary gift. We, on our part, to make the equation balance, give them death and misery. Your way of life only grows like an exotic hothouse vine from their deaths, which is something more intimate than any romance.

Hartman offers a brief geneaology of cowrie shells, "the currency of West Africa in the era of the Atlantic slave trade":

> Twelve to sixteen pounds of cowries were enough to purchase a strapping young man or two small children. That was about one pound of cowries or every thirteen pounds of human flesh. ...Even now it

k I do not condone the authors' use of "auschwitz" as a generic term, however intentionally shocking. The universalization of horror may be real, but we need not agree to it.

> is difficult to comprehend the scope of devastation wrought by the appetite for nonessential goods. This destruction of life gave birth to capitalism in the West, but what is staggering is that the enormous losses suffered in Africa were without any lasting gains.

There were not yet capitalist societies in West Africa, and these cowries, in their exchange for human life, brought momentary luxuries but not economic development. A mythology developed to explain this shocking phenomenon. "The commoners... offered a grisly account of the origins of cowrie shells and how men came to acquire them. Blood money was what commoners called the shells because they fed upon the flesh of men... The teeth that lined the aperture were clearly for eating... In every place ravaged by the slave trade, stories circulated about the human cost of money: cowrie shells feasted on the bodies of captives. Money multiplied if fed human blood." But even this grisly bargain amounted to nothing for the African slave traders. "It is all dead money now... Cowrie shells were demonetized and eventually outlawed altogether by colonial governments which had divided and conquered Africa in the guise of emancipating it."

the embodied experience

Hartman makes a point here of using visceral, embodied description of this exploitation that implicitly rejects the academic distancing so common in Marxist texts (if not in Marx) that, if a product of capitalist alienation, should surely not be common in its critique. She puts this exploitation in terms of the process of eating, of being devoured.

> Unique to the Atlantic slave trade was the immense scale of accumulating persons and the great violence and death required to produce wealth; and this predatory accumulation was often described by the enslaved in the language of 'being eaten' or as sorcery. And to their eyes, the Europeans were sorcerers of the worst kind. Who could deny that white men gained their strength from black flesh? It was clear for everyone to see: they possessed the power to transform the bones of slaves into gunpowder, to convert blood into wine, and to dine on their organs.

Later, she continues, "Cannibalism provided an allegory for usurping and consuming life. If the wage laborer, according to Marx, was 'someone who has brought his own hide to market and now has nothing to expect but a tanning,' then the slave was the prey hunted and the flesh eaten by the vampire of merchant capital. The slaves did not doubt it." And, of course, eating

produces a repulsive result, just as humans exiled from home in torturous conditions of ultimate misery are forced to live in their own filth. "*Kinishi wo wu shua, kumo e nan wu ebin gba*: The eye that sees gold will see excrement too. So it was said in the heartland of slavery where people knew firsthand the scent of the slave hold. Karl Marx didn't put it any better when he described the genesis of capital, which came into the world 'dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt'. He didn't mention excrement, but he should have." Capitalism, by virtue of its reliance on suffering, stinks of shit to this day.

M. Nourbese Philip, author of *Zong!*—a collection of cut-and-paste poems made out of legal texts from the time a slave ship of that name threw 150 Africans overboard "for want of water," and then had to sort out their insurance claim in court—says this:

> In its potent ability to decree that what is is not, as in a human ceasing to be and becoming an object, a thing or chattel, the law approaches the realm of magic and religion. The conversion of human into chattel becomes an act of transubstantiation... Like a magic wand the law erases all ties—linguistic, societal, cultural, familial, parental, and spiritual... Without a history, name, or culture. In life but without life. Without life in life...

She sees her work as metaphorically exhuming their bodies from the water, breaking the text of their commodification, to return "dignity to the dead." Her work, she says, is *hauntological*. Moreover, her work serves both the Africans who died and the Europeans who murdered their own souls by killing them. This is the sort of project I see as necessary to our aleatory movement around freedom. We cannot "move on," because we have not dealt with the past; nor can we dwell there permanently. Its violent resonances haunt our lives, inflecting them with the constantly-recreated horrors of the past.

White supremacy, as an embodied experience rather than a conscious ideology, is nearly invisible to white people and almost impossible to not see for those against whom it acts. This has been going on for a long time. James Baldwin tells us of school integration in Little Rock following *Brown vs. the Board of Education*:

> It was Southern, therefore, to put it brutally, because of the history of America—the United States of America: and small black boys and

> girls were now paying for this holocaust. They were attempting to go to school. They were attempting to get an education, in a country in which education is a synonym for indoctrination, if you are white, and subjugation, if you are black. It was rather as though small Jewish boys and girls, in Hitler's Germany, insisted on getting a German education in order to overthrow the Third Reich. ...they paid a dreadful price, those children...

This is a blatant example. But Ta-Nehisi Coates intuited its more subtle workings upon his child as he observed white children socializing in Brooklyn: "They were utterly fearless. I did not understand it until I looked out on the street. That was where I saw white parents pushing double-wide strollers down gentrifying Harlem boulevards in T-shirts and jogging shorts. Or I saw them lost in conversation with each other, mother and father, while their sons commanded entire sidewalks with their tricycles. The galaxy belonged to them, and as terror was communicated to our children, I saw mastery communicated to theirs." The experience of these white children implicitly teaches them that they will be okay even if they make mistakes, whereas Coates' black child knows that if he transgresses in the smallest way, he may die. (Hasan Minhaj: "I'm fighting for a world, honestly, where my kids can have the same confidence white people have when they dance.")

Here is the bitter truth Coates needs to communicate to his child:

> In America, it is traditional to destroy the black body—*it is heritage.* Enslavement was not merely the antiseptic borrowing of labor—it is not so easy to get a human being to commit their body against its own elemental interest. And so enslavement must be casual wrath and random manglings, the gashing of heads and brains blown out over the river as the body seeks to escape. It must be rape so regular as to be industrial... And the soul did not escape. The spirit did not steal away on gospel wings. The soul was the body that fed the tobacco, and the spirit was the blood that watered the cotton, and these created the first fruits of the American garden. And the fruits were secured through the bashing of children with stovewood, through hot iron peeling skin away like husk from corn.

This is nothing a parent should have to tell their child; and what is worse, he cannot say that the process he describes is over. Coates, reflecting on the police murder of his friend, found forgiveness an irrelevant question by virtue of our society's foundation in black death: "The need to forgive the officer would not have moved me, because even then, in some inchoate

form, I knew that Prince was not killed by a single officer so much as he was murdered by his country and all the fears that have marked it from birth." And so, to keep his own child safe, he chooses to teach him not to live in abeyance to those fears—not to refrain from wearing hoodies, or from driving, or from performing other simple acts in the world for which young black men are killed—but, instead, to recognize the fears that white people hold that may lead to his own death, to understand the white heritage of destroying black bodies. This understanding is a means of survival.

the colonization of Africa, fascism, and biopolitical control

Arendt and Mbembe both see the colonization of Africa as a root for modern forms of violence, according to their own theorizations. So did several fascists, as we have explored in previous sections: Franco attributed the success of his *Africanista* officers in their war against revolutionary Spain to their experience in Spanish-colonized Morocco; the creation and near-immediate loss of German empire was a source of emotional fuel for the rise of the Third Reich; and colonizing Ethiopia was so important to Mussolini that he sunk endless quantities of troops and resources into the project, though he succeeded only in murdering thousands of Ethiopians.

Arendt sees the "superfluous men" created by the rise of capitalism as the bulk of the early "adventurers" and colonizers who moved into Africa from Europe. "Their only choice had been a negative one, a decision against the workers' movements, in which the best of the superfluous men or of those who were threatened with superfluity established a kind of countersociety through which men could find their way back into a human world of fellowship and purpose." Rather than joining the resistance to capitalism, they facilitated its spread. This, I think, is the fate of all privileged bohemians who do not intentionally turn towards struggle—by their very alienation from the world to which they feel they do not belong, they become the growth edge of its continued existence.

An important innovation in the colonization of Africa, Arendt says, was the governance of more-or-less intact (however afflicted) societies by Europeans, rather than the destruction/incorporation of those societies, as done under past colonial efforts throughout history. This separate-but-unequal system created under the guise of the white man's burden in India, parts of Asia, and Africa, facilitated the dehumanization of those ruled, and generated a simultaneously bureaucratic and violent metric of management for them. That metric, of course, was racial: "Imperialism would have necessitated

the invention of racism[l] as the only possible 'explanation' and excuse for its deeds, even if no race-thinking had ever existed in the civilized world."[m] Without these innovations, fascism may not have been possible, founded as it is in dehumanization and violence, an expression of necropolitics. Mbembe:

> That race (or for that matter racism) figures so prominently in the calculus of biopower is entirely justifiable. After all, more so than class-thinking (the ideology that defines history as an economic struggle of classes), race has been the ever present shadow in Western political thought and practice, especially when it comes to imagining the inhumanity of, or rule over, foreign peoples. Referring to both this ever-presence and the phantomlike world of race in general, Arendt locates their roots in the shattering experience of otherness and suggests that the politics of race is ultimately linked to the politics of death.

Unable to deal with the reality of humans and their societies whose success and functioning were not reliant upon European culture, whites who came to Africa with imperial ambitions (as opposed to the multi-century traditions in Northern Africa of trade, cultural exchange, and intermarriage between people of all races) created racism as a means of justifying their actions, Arendt claims. The invention of bureaucracy to manage the colonies was as important a tool as race; together, they formed the biopolitical distribution of death. It is the discovery of this combination, Arendt says, that made the concentration camp possible—just another horror in the series of experiments first performed upon black bodies. "African colonial possessions became the most fertile soil for the flowering of what later was to become the Nazi elite."

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l Exactly when racism began as such is under debate, as is whether the distinction between racism and race-thinking is as actual as Arendt believes it to be. Race and hatred based on race are certainly constructed; and, certainly, Arendt both possessed racist sentiment and suffered from having it directed at her. To see a thorough exploration of Arendt's anti-blackness, see Kathryn Gines' excellent text *Hannah Arendt and the Negro Question.*

m It did, of course. We have examined some of it in the fascist ideology section, and Arendt does so at greater length in *The Origins of Totalitarianism.*

Mbembe finds these politics alive today, in a "a concatenation of multiple powers: disciplinary, biopolitical, and necropolitical":

> The most accomplished form of necropower is the contemporary colonial occupation of Palestine. Here, the colonial state derives its fundamental claim of sovereignty and legitimacy from the authority of its own particular narrative of history and identity. This narrative is itself underpinned by the idea that the state has a divine right to exist; the narrative competes with another for the same sacred space. Because the two narratives are incompatible and the two populations are inextricably intertwined, any demarcation of the territory on the basis of pure identity is quasi-impossible... As a consequence, colonial violence and occupation are profoundly underwritten by the sacred terror of truth and exclusivity (mass expulsions, resettlement of "stateless" people in refugee camps, settlement of new colonies). Lying beneath the terror of the sacred is the constant excavation of missing bones; the permanent remembrance of a torn body hewn in a thousand pieces and never self-same; the limits, or better, the impossibility of representing for oneself an "original crime," an unspeakable death: the terror of the Holocaust.

> The question is not whether Lincoln truly meant 'government of the people' but what our country has, throughout its history, taken the political term 'people' to actually mean. In 1863 it did not mean your mother or your grandmother, and it did not mean you and me. Thus America's problem is not its betrayal of 'government of the people', but the means by which 'the people' acquired their names.
>
> —Ta-Nehisi Coates

> The government cannot afford to trust a single black man in this country, nor can they penetrate any black's disguise, or apprehend how devious and tenacious black patience can be, and any black man that they appear to trust is useless to them, for he will never be trusted by the blacks. It is true that our weapons do not appear to be very formidable, but, then, they never have. Then, as now, our greatest weapon is silence.
>
> —James Baldwin

The legacy of U.S. slavery is threefold: racism against black people; black rebellion, from slave revolts to modern-day protest; and the United States itself, with its long history of control, surveillance, imprisonment, management, and violence. Anti-black racism we have discussed, though never enough; but, without attempting a real overview, let us highlight a few of its consequences.

By Howard Zinn's count, "Africa lost 50 million human beings to death and slavery in those centuries we call the beginnings of modern Western civilization, at the hands of slave traders and plantation owners in Western Europe and America, the countries deemed the most advanced in the world." But those people who survived capture and the Middle Passage to arrive into the living death of American slavery itself resisted from the beginning. They used means ranging from work slowdowns, pretended ignorance, poison, arson, violence, and escape. Having dehumanized slaves so fully, whites refused to understand these attacks and rebellions as acts by humans seeking freedom. Said a slaveowner, "Poor Ignorant Devils, for what do they run away? They are well cloathed, work easy, and have all kinds of Plantation produce at no allowance."

There was solidarity between poor whites, particularly indentured servants, and enslaved black people from the beginning. Zinn tells us, "It was common, for example, for servants and slaves to run away together, steal hogs together, get drunk together. It was not uncommon for them to make love together." Wealthy white people feared this complicity, and passed laws elevating the status of the white working class, including those who were indentured. It was necessary to instill not only racial hatred, but also differences in material standing—to give poor whites something they could lose—to get them to stand with wealthy white people against the black people with whom they shared a class. This is, after all, the strategy behind the founding of America: if you give something to people with nothing, you can motivate them to join you in the lies of civil society, democracy, and equality, and even to take up arms against those who are not offered the same. In idealistic America, sometimes the only thing you need to give them is words, what Zinn calls the "wonderfully useful device... the language of liberty and equality, which could unite just enough whites to fight a Revolution against England, without ending either slavery or inequality."

Wealthy whites also worried about the possibility of Native Americans joining forces with slaves. "Indian uprisings that punctuated the colonial period and a succession of slave uprisings and insurrections that were nipped in the bud kept South Carolinians sickeningly aware that only through the greatest vigilance and through policies designed to keep their enemies divided could they hope to remain in control of the situation." Since rich whites were unwilling to make Native Americans part of society (and since Native Americans refused to join), they chose to murder them.

Their fears were justified. Stafford and Shirley's *Dixie Be Damned* in part chronicles the maroon communities of the Great Dismal Swamp[n], which stretched across the northern portion of the South. These communities were of mixed Native, African, and European descent, and were united by their shared oppression. "Forced to flee above-ground life as debt fugitives, runaway slaves, or refugees from the brutal wars waged on Indians, the maroons established a permanent life in the swamp while waging a long-term, unceasing guerilla war against plantation society in the form of arson, cattle rustling, crop theft, encouraging slave escapes, and coordinating insurrections throughout the area." Their resistance engendered an intense paranoia among slaveowners in the area; and, moreover, gave a "sense of pride and dignity... [to] slaves across the United States." Their interracial

n Dismal, I imagine, only by the lights of those who had made the rest of the world dismal for those who had fled them. For the latter, the swamp may well have seemed like paradise.

complicity, solidarity and shared lives gave the lie to the supposed *naturalness* of the racial boundaries being enforced by property owners.

However, for most white people, blackness became fully identified with slavehood and less than human status. This can be seen in the frequent abductions and reenslavements of free black people. "...free blacks taken up as slaves were almost completely dependent upon the testimony of whites to prove their status." The consequences of this dehumanization reverberate throughout U.S. history today; when black people are killed by the police (or by people who recognize themselves as possessing the power of the police, as in the case of George Zimmerman), their character is interrogated by white people on cable news. So frequently that it is seldom remarked upon, this kind of interrogation happens before a parole board, or even by security guards in a department store.

Mbembe points to slavery as one of the first instances of biopolitical experimentation. For an overseer, managing a large population of humans who did not want to live as they did and frequently tried to escape—while still motivating them to work, reproduce, and refrain from burning down the house when their children were taken from their breast—was a serious challenge. An entire series of techniques around population control, surveillance, and the maintenance of low-level misery were developed in the cotton field and the big house that are still used today to police black neighborhoods, cell blocks, and even, to some degree, the rest of society. Preventing slaves from gaining access to education was key; more than a century after the Emancipation Proclamation, this is still remembered in the black community. When Michael Brown was murdered by police in Ferguson, MO, his mother, Lezley McSpadden, spoke to the media and said, "You took my son away from me. Do you know how hard it was for me to get him to stay in school and graduate? You know how many black men graduate? *Not many!*" In the midst of all her grief over the murder of her son, the fact that she had struggled to give him an education—the means towards freedom—was deeply relevant to her devastation over how easily his life was snatched away. The past does not pass.

Part III. Stories, experience, and lines of flight from white supremacy

> When the pagan and the slave spit on the cross and pick up the gun, it means that the halls of history are about to be invaded once again, destroying and dispersing the present occupants. These, then, can call only on their history to save them—that same history which, in the eyes of the subjugated, has already condemned them. Therefore, Faulkner hoped that American blacks would have the generosity to 'go slow'—would allow white people, that is, the time to save themselves, as though they had not had more than enough time already, and as though their victims still believed in white miracles... American blacks could not 'go slow' because they had made a rendezvous with history for the purpose of taking their children out of history's hands.
>
> —James Baldwin

> I've always acknowledged and articulated that being part of hip-hop was a privilege. I was welcomed into hip-hop. This was not my house. I didn't build this house. This wasn't my culture. I was brought in, and I was welcomed. And that's an honor. I was not entitled to be there.
>
> —Sophia Chang, Korean-Canadian "hip-hop matriarch"

Both trajectories of thought explored in this section are mixtures of mythology, analysis, and experience that call for action around the same subject: white supremacy in the modern United States. Moreover, they are both embattled mythologies, existing in resistance to the popular bourgeois mythology of the American Dream: corporate success, calm, happy (slightly diverse) neighborhoods of (mostly straight and always upwardly mobile) families. I would like to draw out the elements of each that resemble fascist and liberation mythologies we have previously discussed, and to make an argument for the sort of mythologies we—where 'we' means 'people of all colors interested in freedom with a commitment to anti-racist struggle within the United States'—might want to avoid, and the sort we might like to build.

I will primarily refer to Ta-Nehisi Coates' book *Between the World and Me*, written as an open letter to his teenage son in the wake of recent high-profile police shootings of young black men, as an example of the analysis and mythology I think we should build. Again, I make no pretenses towards objectivity, nor do I mean to pit these two against each other as decontextualized ways in which one might simply choose to think: we live in a white supremacist

society, which I oppose. I wish to be extremely clear: I am not calling for the appropriation of black struggle by white people, or by other people of color. Nor am I suggesting that it is the lens through which all other struggles must be viewed. Rather, in the spirit voiced above by Sophia Chang, I am calling for joyfully accepting what is shared when it is offered, and to share in return. The poverty of white perspective on struggle in a culture fundamentally shaped by white supremacy is profound. To look to the experiences of those who survive in resistance to it, to express solidarity with their struggle and to act in relationship to it, to form friendship and share totally, for better and for worse—that is my call, for those who can hear it. There is no obligation here for we who are oppressed to share with those whose predicates place them within our oppressing class; and yet, beautifully, we often do, troubling that dichotomy. Our history is not our destiny.

Manichean anxious simplicity vs. the complex, dialectical, shifting, joyous and contextual.

The Manichaen worldview is most emotionally appealing when you see yourself as good, and especially when you see yourself as the underdog. I am inclined to agree with the belief of "movement" white supremacists that the United States is founded in white supremacy, and that white supremacy will reign anew without the checks, challenges, and problematization it has faced throughout its history, unless we are able to renew them, or intervene even futher. For me, this is a terrifying thought; it feeds my anxiety, sense of dread, and paranoia. I do not have the calming medicine of what Lauren Berlant terms a "cruelly optimistic" attachment to the American Dream; I live already in economic and social precarity, and the idea of ending up in a *Handmaid's Tale* dystopian hellscape, complete with camps, is horrible to me. I do not even have the religious conviction that "everything happens for a purpose", or "God will look after His people;" I've read too much history to believe that.[o]

This is what accepting the premises of Manichaeism does to a person. What dialectical understanding shows us, on the other hand, is that the world is

o In *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Agamben references Hans Jonas's attempt at theodicy: "... asking, that is, how it was possible for God to tolerate Auschwitz. ...Like all thoedicies, Jonas's ends in an acquittal. The justification for the sentence is something like this: 'The infinite (God) stripped himself completely, in the finite, of his omnipotence. Creating the world, God gave it His own fate and became powerless. Thus, having emptied himself entirely in the world, he no longer has anything to offer us; it is now man's turn to give. Man can do that by taking care that it never happens, or rarely happens, that God regrets his decision to have let the world be.'" Agamben remarks that this is hardly useful; "Behind the powerlessness of God peeps the powerlessness of men, who continue to cry 'May that never happen again!' when it is clear that 'that' is, by now, everywhere." (Agamben 20 (2002).)

cyclical, but an outwards spiral—we may pass by the same points of tension, but we do so in a different way each time, inflected by what has happened between now and then. Their white supremacist "paradise" is not possible, but the past and currently unfolding hell of white supremacy in America is very real. Joe Arpaio already ran his camp; we have already lost at least four thousand people to lynchings. Coates offers us a clear analysis of the white supremacist roots of the United States and their modern manifestations; but his is a narrative that gives strength rather than dread, informs and builds feeling without disempowering his reader. "'To yell 'black-on-black crime'", he says, "is to shoot a man and then shame him for bleeding." Then he quotes the words of the mother of a black youth, a child murdered by a white man, to his own black teenage son: "You exist. You matter. You have value. You have every right to wear your hoodie, to play your music as loud as you want. You have every right to be you. And no one should deter you from being you. You have to be you. And you can never be afraid to be you." This is a beautiful expression of solidarity within common struggle. Joyful survival in the face of fear is here given deeper meaning by the legacy of trauma, by all the dangers facing black youth that stem from white supremacy, and it is understood as such via complexity, rather than fearing it might be diminished by it.

Jasbir Puar speaks to both the importance of the intersectional approach to social analysis and its "affirmative, convivial, frictional" relationship with assemblage theory in her essay "'I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess:' Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory", which I have mentioned before. I think it becomes relevant again here as a move towards this *clarifying complexity*, away from simplistic grids. Intersectionality can serve to affirm the categories it analyses: in a "one step forward two steps back" advancement from second-wave feminism, one may not simply be a woman, but a black woman, *and* the experience of both of those predicates (especially by those outside oneself) is coded as necessary and fundamental to the way one interacts with the world. Puar: "...intersectionality always produces an Other, and that Other is always a Woman of Color... who must invariably be shown to be resistant, subversive, or articulating a grievance"; the reference point from which they differ is always white. Intersectionality has therefore mainly been useful insofar as it has been used by women of color to trouble this Othering.

Assemblage theory, on the other hand—at first a product of white male imagination, in defiance of our (however oppositional) expectations formed by such essential categories—troubles each definition as it lays itself across

the body. Within both modes of thought, one may be, say, a white cis woman accepted by her community but lacking in economic privilege—and that experience will be entirely different than the experience of a person with any one of those categories changed; the only similarities are those enforced by oppression or affirmed through solidarity.[p] The difference is in how *static* any of those categories are understood to possibly be as one moves through *space and time*. Rather than continuing to atomize identity into each person's singular experience, the framework of assemblages defies the confines of the body, and instead considers the ways in which they relate to each other over the course of movement through space and time (which is itself not necessarily linear), through each social and biological interaction. Indeed, it defies the limitations of these interactions to the human. Furthermore, the framework allows the possibility of choice, of free will, of contradiction; of, most importantly for us, defiance. It establishes the *spaces of slippage* Andy Merrifield called for, something radically undefinable and inessential.

Context—material history—and an acceptance of complexity, aleatory movement, and the possibility of joyous rather than anxious survival are necessary to an analysis that gives life to those who seek it, an analysis that motivates and sustains communal action in the world, rather than crystallizing into an inwards-facing cannibalism or a purely solitary practice.

Essentialism vs. material analysis marked by an understanding of social construction.

We have examined essentialism in practice from several different angles throughout this project. Modern conscious white supremacists in the U.S. have a few different spins on it—some believe people of color are inherently less valuable, more dangerous, less intelligent, and so on than white people; others, that all races are equal but should remain separate (which in practice always means the unequal); still others advance a pseudo-compassionate, neo-Lamarckian racism that has some analysis of historical traumas, like slavery, or social ills, like absentee fathers—and argues that those forces have made an impact that extends beyond the life of any one person, to function on a racial level. Lost in a sea of alienation, they try to make America what it never was—a white country—and try to find identity in that newly constructed essential category of whiteness. The ways in which people have historically passed in and out of whiteness in this country—from Irish immigrants, to

p What is it to be a poor white woman in the company of other poor white women, from your region—or from far away? What is it to be poor and white in relation to rich white people? What is it to be poor and white and a woman in relation to a particular poor black person whom one knows and loves dearly? How was it when you were a child? How will it be when you are old? How will it be at work next Thursday? And so on.

some Jews, to Syrian refugees—do not seem to undermine it as a home in their eyes, but rather situate it further as a place to defend from infiltration.

When attacking essentialism, it is helpful to remember that it only *masquerades* as a useful tool. It is never useful—except to heighten the impact of emotional rhetoric at the expense of reason—to flatten the experience of any one or several humans into a simple story; it is certainly not possible to accurately do so with a whole "race." The point of essentialist rhetoric is merely to establish who the Other is, and why one ought to fear them, a sort of soldier's brew designed to dehumanize the enemy so one is better able to use or kill them. We need a complex understanding for all other goals.

Coates refers to the "dreamers," those white people asleep in the promise of the American Dream and therefore not conscious to the violent reality of racism in America. He speaks to the possibility of waking them up. Consistently, he describes them as *the people who believe they are white*, rather than depicting white people as a permanent monolithic force. While I am quite suspicious of attempts by white people to reconnect with their ethnic heritages, which is possibly what Coates is pointing to, I prefer to read him as suggesting the possibility of being a race traitor to whiteness. This is not an abstract possibility, not dreamed up solely in anti-racist white reading and discussion groups; we can think instead of the complicity between the white, black, indigenous, and mixed-race communities of the Great Dismal Swamp. Whiteness is no more authentic and necessarily true than the racist construction of what it is to be a black American: it is constructed as a part of primitive accumulation, as the separation of people from their material realities by the imposition of abstract concepts—alienation.

It does not disenfranchise you from the experience of *home* to recognize that home as a constructed one. Coates:

> In that single exchange with that young man ['My bad.' 'You straight.'], I was speaking the personal language of my people. It was the briefest intimacy, but it captured much of the beauty of my black world—the ease between your mother and me, the miracle at The Mecca [Howard University], the way I feel myself disappear on the streets of Harlem. To call that feeling racial is to hand over all the diamonds, fashioned by our ancestors, to the plunderer. We made that feeling, though it was forged in the shadow of the murdered, the raped, the disembodied, we made it all the same. This is the beautiful thing that I have seen with my own eyes, and I think I needed this vantage point before I could journey out.

> I think I needed to know that I was from somewhere, that my home was as beautiful as any other.

Coates refuses the easiness of "call[ing] that feeling racial," but situates it within his lived experience of being black among black people. It is possible to generate a sense of home within a diaspora, if you make your home within other people you have come to know. And he makes his chosen complexity of relationship explicit: "...I had friends who too were part of other worlds—the world of Jews or New Yorkers, the world of Southerners or gay men, of immigrants, of Californians, of Native Americans, or a combination of any of these, worlds stitched into worlds like tapestry. And though I could never, myself, be a native of any of these worlds, I knew that nothing so essentialist as race stood between us." Coates reminds us of the embodied possibility of a life neither bound by our predicates nor ignorant of their reality.

Separation from the world vs. surviving violence and building something beyond it.

White supremacist ideology calls for either separation from the world or violent action against it; the black resistance thought we have been reading instead concerns the necessary means of continuing to exist in the world, and to survive, question, and surpass the violence of that existence.

The liberation mythology that may most make sense for an American context is that of the runaway slave, or the slave rebellion. This is not to call for white Americans to appropriate even this most black of narratives; nor is it to erase the many other forms of struggle for life conducted in this country by people who are not slaves; nor is it to pretend that slavery is over. I want none of those. But I also do not want Harriet Tubman's brave legacy to be completely recuperated by her inclusion on the twenty-dollar bill, as if replacing a slaveowner with an escaped slave will somehow replace the foundation of the American Dream in slavery, oppression, and commodification with a foundation of courage and heroism—or, indeed, to change what money is used for, then and now. To exist in this reality against your will, but refuse to die—to have been dispossessed by your home again and again, and yet to insist that you live here now—to fight for your survival, and the survival of others—this is the American nightmare transformed and made beautiful in struggle, the underlying metaphor throughout our society that can sustain those of us who refuse the Dream, or to whom it was never made available. It acknowledges the ugliness of our past, a place we would never want to return to—but celebrates the strands of resistance that have allowed us to survive until today.

Coates' book stands out to me as an exemplary synthesis of analysis, lived experience, and mythology about this nightmare. It is the sort of thing we need, and should create ourselves, all of us, to contribute to our own lives, the lives of our loved ones, and to share broadly. Coates tells his son,

> And you know now, if you did not before, that the police departments of your country have been endowed with the authority to destroy your body. It does not matter if the destruction is the result of an unfortunate overreaction. It does not matter if it originates in a misunderstanding. It does not matter if the destruction springs from a foolish policy. Sell cigarettes without the proper authority and your body can be destroyed. Resent the people trying to entrap your body and it can be destroyed. Turn into a dark stairwell and your body can be destroyed. The destroyers will rarely be held accountable. Mostly, they will receive pensions. And the destruction is merely the superlative form of a dominion whose perogatives include friskings, detainings, beatings, and humiliations. All of this is common to black people. And all of this is old to black people. No one is held responsible.

This cuts directly through all of the meaningless conversation had by so many; it cannot be co-opted by a cynical reformism, nor easily appropriated for a fresh horror. Coates' quiet despair is the earth in which a sort of quiet and angry hope can bloom. He knows the point of history, the point of forming these analyses:

> ...how do I live free in this black body? It is a profound question because America understands itself as God's handiwork, but the black body is the clearest evidence that America is the work of men....The question is unanswerable, which is not to say futile. The greatest reward of this constant interrogation, of confrontation with the brutality of my country is that it has freed me from ghosts and girded me against the sheer terror of disembodiment.

This hauntology is different from the sort of search for identity practiced by whites who feel disenfranchised; Coates is resisting the dehumanization created by racism, without settling on an identity as a solution: "The question is unanswerable..." While we all experience alienation at this point in capitalism, it is through history and life and struggle that we resist it, not through the proposed enactment of our own private utopia, one reserved for only a select few and governed by the same rules of power that inflect our current hell.

Freedom from the state, not refuge in it

Many of the accounts we have read here of state violence, including the concentration camp, the prison and its older cousin, slavery, point to a truth: there is no safety within the state for those not granted citizenship by it, whether that lack is technical or simply material. If our society is so precarious... could there be safety beyond it?

While no one would call them safe, refugee communities, Hartman asserts, are communities of those who dream of freedom. Hartman imagines this narrative among those who were able to escape from the slavers in West Africa:

> "We" was the collectivity they built from the ground up, not one they had inherited, not one that others had imposed. And the dreams of what might be possible were enshrined in the names of these towns and villages founded by fugitives: *safe at last, we have come together, here where no one can reach us anymore, the village of free people, here we speak of peace, a place of abundance, haven.*

This stands in challenge to our usual social perceptions of refugees, whom we tend to see as victims knocking at our well-fed doors. It is true that the socially rightless live in a necropolitical condition. Arendt says of refugees: "The prolongation of their lives is due to charity and not to right, for no law exists which could force the nations to feed them; their freedom of movement, if they have it at all, gives them no right to residence which even the jailed criminal enjoys as a matter of course; and their freedom of opinion is a fool's freedom, for nothing they think matters anyhow." She found these conditions of the stateless—and their numbers, which have only increased—the ultimate condemnation of the nation-state. Could one not say the same for the lives of many who are legally citizens of the United States, but are practically disenfranchised? What of the struggle of those who live here without documents?

Of course, many claim to be concerned for those of precarious rights, and come to power through those claims. "...it is perfectly true that the totalitarian movement seizes power in much the same sense as a foreign conquerer may occupy a country which he governs not for its own sake, but for the benefit of something or somebody else." It is in this way that our self-appointed saviors justify actions taken not in the best interest of the actual citizenry; it is for these reasons that we cannot trust reform.

This lesson has been learned again and again; the past does not pass. "In 1817, the black abolitionist Robert Wedderburn warned of the dangers of appeal. In an address to the slaves of Jamaica, he encouraged them to stage a general strike to win their liberty. 'Union among you, will strike tremendous terror to the receivers of stolen persons. But do not petition, for it is degrading to human nature to petition your oppressors.'" More recently, Hartman reminds us that Martin Luther King, Jr., said at the March on Washington, 'America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked with insufficient funds.' The promissory note to which King referred was the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence"—checks seldom ever cashed, beyond the occasional Supreme Court case. In any case, Hartman reflects, "I had grown weary of pleading our case and repeating our complaint. It seems to me there is something innately servile about making an appeal to a deaf ear or praying for relief to an indifferent and hostile court or expecting remedy from a government unwilling even to acknowledge that slavery was a crime against humanity."

We can choose to center slave rebellions and flight—and Native survival, queer rebellion, the flourishing of migrants, and the collusion of some of the people who have been told they are white—as our American history/mythology. We can refuse the narratives placed before us that sustain our suffering, and turn towards solidarity and survival. We can dream of a better world, and work to materialize those dreams through the disintegration of this one, without reproducing the state and all of its nightmares. We can reject the drunken false freedom of embracing our alienation, our self-hatred, and our insecurities, and instead find freedom in each other's arms. If conspiracy means t*o breathe together*, how may we conspire for freedom? I have broken my suggestions into three sections: ethics, tactics, and the project. They are really all the same.

> ...it must be becoming increasingly clear to some, at least, that all of us are standing in the same deep shadow, a shadow which can only be lifted by human courage and honor. Many still hope to keep their honor and their safety, too. No one can blame them for this hope, it is impossible indeed not to share it: but when queried as to the soundness of such a hope, for a people caught in a civilization in crisis, history fails to give any very sanguine answers.
>
> — James Baldwin

> Then she asked me about 'hope.' And I knew then that I had failed. And I remembered that I had expected to fail. And I wondered again at the indistinct sadness welling up in me.
>
> —Ta-Nehisi Coates

the project

To destroy racism, fascism, sexism, or homophobia, we must destroy essentialism; that is, to have a liberatory revolution of any kind, we must destroy essentialism. Essentialism undermines struggle by dividing us against ourselves. This is also the reactionary argument against "identity politics", which is only the title for the most failed and recuperated efforts of exploring difference, trying to practice solidarity, and respecting material reality while welcoming self-creation. That project, I believe, is worthwhile; the fact that it has often gone badly is due to the lack of our permanent or pervasive success. We cannot cede the ground of identity to white nationalists, or let recuperation continue unchecked. And, as anti-essentialists, we have to see everything as constructed. The advantage of this viewpoint is that it allows for free will and self-invention; and therefore guilt and accountability. If we could become anything we wanted, so could our enemies—and yet they chose this world, as it is! But we are not doomed, and they are not doomed to be our forever-enemies. Everything is in a state of *becoming*, as Coates reminds us:

> Enslavement was not destined to end, and it is wrong to claim our present circumstance—no matter how improved—as the redemption for the lives of people who never asked for the posthumous, untouchable glory of dying for their children. Our triumphs can never compensate for this. Perhaps our triumphs are not even the point. Perhaps struggle is all we have because the god of history is an atheist and nothing about his world is meant to be. So you must wake up every morning knowing that no promise is unbreakable, least of all the promise of waking up at all. This

> is not despair. These are the preferences of the universe itself: verbs over nouns, actions over states, struggle over hope.

I feel that we must do away with hope. Hope, like good intentions, are a prediction of an impossible future, which I am for—but when that future fails to arrive, its disappointed partisans often fall away and become pragmatically resigned. Hope, I think, is most likely to be bourgeois or fascist, an excuse rather than a motivation. Instead, I call for the embrace of joyous nihilism—of knowing you are likely doomed, and that you are therefore free to act—beautifully, nobly, cheerfully. And so we have to destroy the mythology of the American Dream, the 'good life' (Berlant) that is killing us—either directly or by virtue of its ever-receding horizon. We have to do this on an ethical basis, but also a tactical one. Coates:

> This is the foundation of the Dream—its adherents must not just believe in it but believe that it is just, believe that their possession of the Dream is the natural result of grit, honor, and good works.There is some passing acknowledgement of the bad old days, which, by the way, were not so bad as to have any ongoing effect on our present. The mettle that it takes to look away from the horror of our prison system, from police forces transformed into armies, from the long war against the black body, is not forged overnight. This is the practiced habit of jabbing out one's eyes and forgetting the work of one's hands. To acknowledge these horrors means turning away from the brightly rendered version of your country as it has always declared itself and turning toward something murkier and unknown. It is still too difficult for most Americans to do this. But that is your work.

Arendt says that the problem of totalitarian ideologies is an overreliance upon logic, and that we rely on logic because we are afraid of self-contradiction and human complication. Ideas are no longer so important; once we have accepted their premises, we must complete every thought to its logical end. What would it mean to refuse that path? Arendt also says that isolation is not necessarily bad—is essential to some projects, and can lead to solitude, which is good—but can also breed loneliness, which is one of the worst feelings a human can experience. She calls loneliness "the common ground for terror, the essence for totalitarianism" and says it is related to the feeling of superfluity, caused by uprootedness. "The famous extremism of totalitarian movements, far from having anything to do with true radicalism, consists indeed in this 'thinking everything to the worst', in this deducing process which always arrives at the worst possible conclusions." This is the productive

force behind anxiety, the driving emotional force of our era. Arendt sees the bliss of human connection and gratitude for others as fundamental to countering the terror of totalitarian possibilities.Return is alluring to all of us, not only fascists.

> Standing in the dark recesses of the holding cell for female slaves, I felt both the pull and the impossibility of regaining the country lost. It has never been more clear than it was then: return is what you hold on to after you have been taken from your country, or when you realize that there is no future in the New World, or that death is the only future. Return is the hunger for all the things you once enjoyed or the yearning for all the things you never enjoyed. It bears the impress of everything that has been taken from you. It is the last resort of the defeated. It is the diversion of suicides and dreamers. It is the elsewhere of insurrectionists. It is the yearning of those who can 'summon filial love for persons and places they have never known.' Like the myth of the mother, the promise of return is all that remains in the wake of slavery. If you close your eyes, you can imagine yourself once again safe in her arms. With a rifle pointed at your chest, you can travel home.

We must transform the urge to re-enact the past into our struggle in the present. We must reject the limits of time and space, and bring two points together, to converge not in vengeance but in hard-won wisdom. Most of all, we must reject the future, and all its candied promises, false securities, and vague consequences of doom. The path lies somewhere between; we can access it in moments again and again, as a collective of those in struggle across history. Saidiya Hartman calls for us to understand slaves as our ghostly contemporaries, haunting our present:

> To believe, as I do, that the enslaved are our contemporaries is to understand that we share their aspirations and defeats, which isn't to say that we are owed what they were due but rather to acknowledge that they accompany our every effort to fight against domination, to abolish the color line, and to establish a free territory, a new commons. It is to take to heart their knowledge of freedom. The enslaved knew that freedom had to be taken; it was not the kind of thing that could ever be given to you. The kind of freedom that could be given to you could just as easily be taken back. Freedom is the kind of thing that required you to leave your bones on the hills at Brimsbay, or to burn the cane fields, or to live in a garret for seven years, or to stage a general strike, or to create a new republic. It is won and lost, again and again. It is a glimpse of possibility,

an opening, a solicitation without any guarantee of duration before it flickers and then is extinguished.

The demands of the slave on the present have everything to do with making good the promise of abolition, and this entails much more than the end of property in slaves. It requires the reconstruction of society, which is the only way to honor our debt to the dead. This is the intimacy of our age with theirs—an unfinished struggle. To what end does one conjure the ghost of slavery, if not to incite the hopes of transforming the present? Given this, I refuse to believe that the slave's most capacious political claims or wildest imaginings are for back wages or debt relief. There are too many lives at peril to recycle the forms of appeal that, at best, have delivered the limited emancipation against which we now struggle.

Benjamin concurs, and tells us it is the memory of the past rather than the promise of the future that must motivate our struggle. It is relevant that he does so from his grave on the Spanish-French border; he killed himself there to escape the Nazi forces arriving with his death-warrant. He says:

Not man or men but the struggling, oppressed class itself is the depository of historical knowledge. In Marx it appears as the last enslaved class, as the avenger that completes the task of liberation in the name of generations of the downtrodden. This conviction... has always been objectionable to Social Democrats. Within three decades they managed virtually to erase the name of Blanqui, though it had been the rallying sound that had reverberated through the preceding century. Social Democracy thought it fit to assign to the working class the role of redeemer of future generations, in this way cutting the sinews of its greatest strength. *This training made the working class forget both its hatred and its spirit of sacrifice, for both are nourished by the image of enslaved ancestors rather than that of liberated grandchildren.* [emphasis mine]

*W*e must listen to this chorus of our dead, but fight for the living.

Finally, no one can be in charge of this. Instead, we need to create *spaces of indeterminacy* in which we can listen to each other. "...any gathering contains many inchoate political futures and...political work consists of helping some of those come into being. Indeterminacy is not the end of history, but rather that node in which many beginnings lie in wait. To listen politically is to detect the traces of not-yet-articulated common agendas." Rather than creating

false unities, we should listen for what Tsing terms *the latent commons*, "fugitive moments of entanglement in the midst of institutionalized alienation... Some radical thinkers hope that progress will lead us to a redemptive and utopian commons. In contrast, the latent commons is here and now, amidst the trouble. And humans are never fully in control."

It is not *you* or *I* that is important in the sentence you and I, but *and*; so now I no longer say *I*, but *we*.

We propose autonomy and collectivity, rather than elitism or populism. We are against the hierarchy of categories and the essentialism that makes those categories possible; we acknowledge and refuse our material realities at the same time, passing thus out of our predicates and towards humanity. We say fuck nationalism, and fuck the failed dreams of both socialism and social democracy. At once, we dream and practice a horizontal distribution of power and mutual aid, rather than dreaming and awaiting the once and future king. We are against the imposition of false unity and coercive 'understanding'; we lean towards the respecting of self-defined difference "and it harm none", recognizing that the imposition of sameness is the most common harm. We do not want to relate to each other through things, but through a web of relationships with all, human and otherwise. We are against time and space—we have had anarchy in moments, in the future and the past, and scorn either a progressivist or accelerationist model. We practice what Bonnano called the anarchist *tension*, a striving towards, rather than an achieved goal or a revolutionary purity. We are retelling history as the genealogy of struggle and solidarity, of collusion and conspiracy, of race and gender traitors—and survivors. We tell the story of the possible but not far away future via the story of the *other present*, the free reality that is the other side of our current Upside Down. We center love, allowing us to see the stranger as a possible friend, and our birthright as our enemy. Since we learned to discard hope, we have been able to see the shape of our joyful reality of struggle. It is like this:

> ...for power to truly feel itself menaced, it must somehow sense itself in the presence of another power—or, more accurately, an energy—which it has not known how to define and therefore does not really know how to control. For a very long time, for example, America prospered—or seemed to prosper: this prosperity cost millions of people their lives. Now, not even the people who are the most spectacular recipients of the benefits of this prosperity are able to endure these benefits: they can neither understand them nor do without them, nor can they go beyond them. Above all, they cannot, or dare not, assess or imagine the price

paid by their victims, or their subjects, for this way of life, and so they cannot afford to know why the victims are revolting...

...This is a formula for a nation's or a kingdom's decline, for no kingdom can maintain itself by force alone... it is ultimately fatal to create too many victims. The victor can do nothing with these victims, for they do not belong to him, but—to the victims. They belong to the people he is fighting. The people know this, and as inexorably as the roll call—the honor roll—of victims expands, so does their will become inexorable: they resolve that these dead, their brethren, shall not have died in vain. When this point is reached, however long the battle may go on, the victor can never be the victor: on the contrary, all his energies, his entire life, are bound up in a terror he cannot articulate, a mystery he cannot read, a battle he cannot win—he has simply become the prisoner of the people he thought to cow, chain, or murder into submission.

Power, then, which can have no morality in itself, is yet dependent on human energy, on the wills and desires of human beings. When power translates itself into tyranny, it means that the principles on which that power depended, and which were its justification, are bankrupt. When this happens, and it is happening now, power can only be defended by thugs and mediocrities—and seas of blood. The representatives of the *status quo* are sickened and divided, and dread looking into the eyes of their young; while the excluded begin to realize, having endured everything, that they *can* endure everything. They do not know the precise shape of the future, but they know that the future belongs to them. They realize this—paradoxically—by the failure of the moral energy of their oppressors, and begin, almost instinctively, to forge a new morality, to create the principles on which a new world will be built.

—James Baldwin

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Incontestably, alas, most people are not, in action, worth very much; and yet, every human being is an unprecedented miracle. One tries to treat them as the miracles they are, while trying to protect oneself against the disasters they've become.

Chapters, posters, and additional material may be found at unquietdead.tumblr.com